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Common Ground

This edition is dedicated to
Ben Banky
1968 - 2008

the gift of abundance

New healthcare mantra • Information highway hijacking

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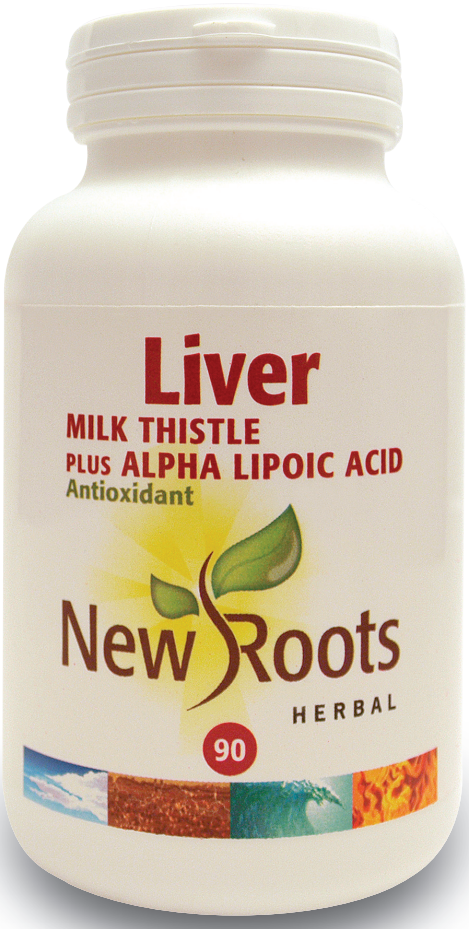

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Child Honouring –The Compassion Revolution

Renowned singer, author and ecology advocate **RAFFI CAVOUKIAN** presents his philosophy, Child Honouring: a universal ethic for planetary consciousness, a compassionate revolution in values. It's a theme he's shared in diverse settings such as the World Bank, Parliament Hill, Harvard, and the New York Academy of Medicine.

"I entirely agree with Raffi Cavoukian that children everywhere are like the seeds of the future of our world."
His Holiness the Dalai Lama

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"A wonderful movement that calls to the hearts of all of us."
Gary Zukav, author of The Seat of the Soul

"No initiative I know carries more galvanizing power of truth."
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Thursday, May 21, 2009
Thompson Rivers University, Grand Hall
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visit Raffinews.com

Common Ground

www.commonground.ca

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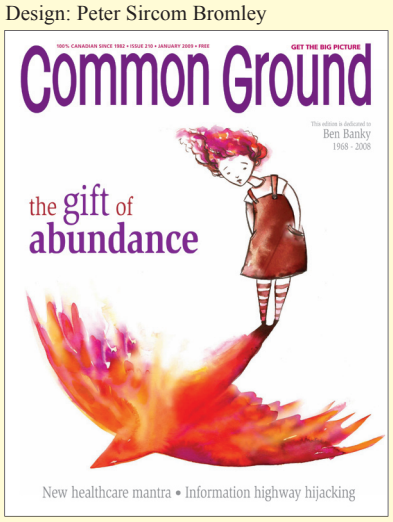

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Front cover

The illustration entitled *Reflection* on our cover is by Toronto-based artist Emma SanCartier.
www.emmasancartier.com

Battling the banks to save public power

WRITING ON THE WALL *Representative Dennis Kucinich*

Once they were as gods, but the deities of the American banking system are now in ruins, plunged from their pedestals into the maw of taxpayer largesse. Congress voted to give the banks $700 billion, lifting them temporarily out of their sepulcher of debt, while revealing a deep truth about the condition of America's financial powers:

They never had the money they said they had as they constructed their debt-based monetary system, which now lies in ruins. Their decisions on behalf of depositors, shareholders and investors were lacking in basic integrity and common sense. Green gods bailing out with their golden parachutes. There was a time when their power was real. Come with me to Cleveland 30 years ago today.

Dec. 15, 1978, Cleveland, Ohio

I awoke to find a curt payment demand that was dropped on my front step by a grandfatherly man who supplemented his Social Security delivering the morning newspaper. The headline plastered across the front page:

Cleveland Trust: Pay Up. Bank would relent if Muny Light were sold, Forbes believes.

One of America's largest banks, Cleveland Trust, led local banks in demanding immediate payment from the city by midnight, Dec. 15, of $14.5 million in short-term loans.

I regarded the headline skeptically. Having lived in 21 different places by the time I was 17, including a couple of cars, I had come to an encyclopedic knowledge of dun letters, sent to my parents by battalions of bill collectors seeking immediate payment for televisions, cars and a variety of household appliances that never seemed to work. I first came to regard these credit alarms with trepidation, later with impassiveness, with the expectation that as our family grew to two adults and seven children it would soon be on the move again, incurring new delinquencies with each new address. Lack of access to money, housing and credit seemed to be a permanent condition.

Now, having fought through a thicket of consequence to become America's youngest mayor, elected on a promise to stop the privatization of the city's electric system,

continued p.12...

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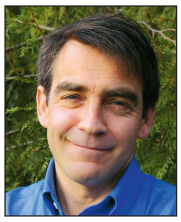


Less is more: make it your new healthcare mantra

HEALTH

DRUG BUST *Alan Cassels*

If you listen closely to the pleas of health advocates and patient groups, those who push for better treatments for specific diseases, such as Alzheimer's, cancer, arthritis or heart disease, there is a common refrain. That refrain, summed up in a word, is "More."

We need more drugs. We need more CT or MRI machines. We need more doctors. We need more specialists. We need more access to everything. More. More. More.

And then add the requests for more of everything that supports a decent quality of life. Advocates for the homeless make pleas for more affordable rental housing. AIDs advocates make a very strong case for government-supported safe injection sites. Seniors advocates make demands for more assisted living complexes to support seniors in their frail years. More. More. More. The advocates often feel like their pleas are mere cries in the wilderness.

If you are a health bureaucrat, policymaker or politician, you probably spend a lot of time listening to the competing groups stating their case for More, More, More. You may spend much of your workday trying to satisfy the needs of those who are asking for more. And choosing to make more of one thing accessible to one group inevitably means money that is not going towards a competing claim. After all, there is a limited supply of tax dollars to go around.

The sense of a limited supply of money brings a level of discipline to the way government doles out our collective wealth. Yet I believe it's occasionally worth putting aside those decisions for a moment and stepping back to take a look at the big picture at the way we manage all our collective resources, of which healthcare is only a single slice.

At the beginning of the year, let's ask ourselves, "What kind of show are we humans running here on this planet?" Our planet consists of nearly unimaginable health extremes. The poorest billion people on Earth live on less than a dollar a day, a level of deprivation that necessitates being dominated by the issue of survival. More than 25,000 children under five die every day from the most easily preventable diseases: diarrhoea, parasites, malnutrition and malaria. This one billion people lack even the most basic components of health and improving their chances of survival depends on their getting more of almost everything: clean water, decent clothing, adequate shelter, basic healthcare, income, peace and democracy. Even a little more of any of these simple things would produce a huge impact on the lives of these people.

At the other end of the spectrum, where the majority of Canadians live, are another billion or so people for whom survival is almost a foreign concept. These people can easily think of more ways to spend our collective wealth. Nearly half of our provincial budgets are allocated for healthcare and still there is a belief in scarcity – a belief that we need more drugs, more machines, more specialists and more doctors to solve our woes.

That's not to say that a lot of our collective health spending couldn't be better managed. There's good evidence that the way we organize healthcare is so chaotic and irrational that we overspend and underspend in areas that have nothing to do with rationality and equity. What I see at this extreme rich end of the rich spectrum is an absurd level of obsession with avoidance of death at any cost and a collective self-absorption to fight an unwinnable war. Supporting this war is a belief that prophylactic medicine – medicine at any cost, and often against the dictates of evidence, rationality or even common sense – presents nothing but positive contributions to our health. Here we see people plunking down $2,500 to buy a full body CT scan, convinced that it'll give them the edge they need to save them from the inevitable. Many more get tested and treated, poked and prodded, diagnosed, medicated, swabbed, jabbed, cut and eviscerated, to an extent that sometimes seems quite laughable if it wasn't so regrettable.

Some beliefs are decidedly bad for your health. Let's examine some of the more absurd of those beliefs, shall we?

Brand name means better healthcare: How about the belief that brand name drugs are always better than generic drugs? This singular idiocy means that we Canadians collectively spend $2 billion more on drugs than is necessary every year. Don't tell me we can't afford to meet even the most minimal levels of foreign aid befitting of a developed country when we allow this lunacy to continue. Buying a patent-protected drug when a cheaper generic exists is a tax on the uninformed. If you believe that a patented treatment always infers some kind of clinical advantage over the unpatented stuff, you should probably be forced to pay for your beliefs. And please don't expect the taxpayer to pay for your foolishness.

Screen early, screen often: Another absurd belief that many of us have is that it's a great idea to screen healthy people for disease. Yet screening healthy people can involve insidious and uncounted harms and it is expensive and often terribly unnecessary. There may be dozens of cancer screening programs out there, but only three – count'em three – types of screening programs for cancer have sufficient scientific evidence for authorities to recommend them for the whole population. What are they? Breast screening (mammography) for women over 50, cervical cancer screening (the pap test) and colorectal cancer screening (fecal occult blood test). All the others that we hear about – full body screening, lung cancer screening, PSA or prostate screening, other organ screening, heart screening, (angiography) etc, etc. – are not recommended even though they are heavily marketed and promoted through both the media and private clinics.

A civilized society is measured not by how well it takes care of its most privileged citizens, but how well it takes care of those who have nothing.

Government is protecting us from drug marketing and screening scams: Sadly, that one is wrong too. In Canada, despite all the marketing of both screening and drugs, there is minimal consumer protection from the blatant fear-mongering advertisements you see asking you to take a drug or come on down to the local private clinic for a full body or heart or lung scan. Colleges of Physicians, Health Canada regulators and other professional organizations point at each other when asked who should be minding the store. Even if you believe in minimal government control over your life, you could not disagree with the need for some state involvement overlooking the advertising and marketing of health care products and devices that could hurt you.

Screening and newer drugs are always of incredible benefit: Sadly, this is wrong too. Both the provision of new drugs and preventative health screening are highly controversial because the actual benefit for most people is very small. A new cholesterol-lowering drug might prevent one percent of people taking it from having a heart attack in the next five years. With mammography screening, we'd have to screen 1,000 women with X-ray mammograms every two years for 10 years to prevent about three deaths (compared to a similar group of women not screened). This level of screening will cause about 200 women to experience further investigation (because something suspicious was "found" on their mammogram) or a biopsy. Those women would face the anxiety of having a diagnosis of breast cancer that turned out to be false. It's very hard to counter the "look early, act early" mantra when it comes to cancer screening, the underlying thought being that if you can find it early, you have a better chance of living.

I think it is time we re-examine our healthcare beliefs. Maybe we need to make a pledge to consider a "less is more" mantra towards health spending. We only need look at the level of per capita health spending in the US, which is more than twice the rate of other industrialized countries, to remind ourselves it's how we organize healthcare that counts, not how much we spend.

Major advances in world health could be achieved if we collectively took care of everyone's basic needs – why not start with homelessness in our own cities? – and then worked to ensure we don't let our collective and irrational health beliefs hold us hostage.

The reason that over-treatment and over-diagnosis are such important subjects to us rich one billion is not just because the excesses of medicine can adversely affect our health, but because such appalling excesses leave so many of our fellow citizens behind.

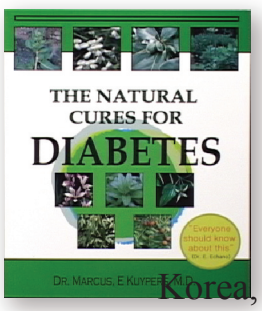
A civilized society is measured not by how well it takes care of its most privileged citizens, but how well it takes care of those who have nothing. Why not pledge that in this New Year, we work to create a rising tide that lifts all boats, not just those of us who live on yachts?

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria.

He uncovers the world of cancer screening in a two-part radio documentary, You are Pre-Diseased, *airing on CBC IDEAS at 9:05 pm, February 12 and 19. Mark your calendars.*

Do You Know?

Many pharmaceutical drugs worsen diabetes, and some actually cause the disease!



"Natural Cures for Diabetes" *(Authored by Dr. M. Kuypers, 91pages)*

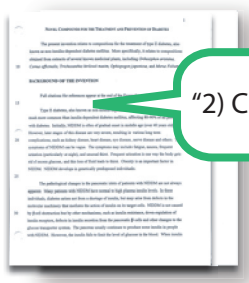
Natural and Safe reversal of Diabetes with no side effects!

From the moment this 91 paged book was first published by Human Love Publishing Co. in 2005, it began to draw keen attention of many diabetes experts and doctors around the world, as well as their patients. The book has been translated and published in China, Korea, Japan, US, and Australia since then. Regarding P 700, which is the natural treatment introduced in this book, researchers of prestigious universities declare that it is not just a symptomatic treatment, but, a 'cure' for Type II diabetes, and it restores normalcy for 70% of patients.

University of Calgary officials (UTI)

"A U of C treatment helps most Type II diabetics."

"This remedy will restore near normalcy for 70% of Type II diabetics."



"2) Cure of NIDDM"

University of Calgary document about P-700

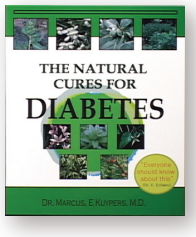
National Diabetic Associations and Pharmaceutical Associations of various countries declared that P700 is ***an ideal cure*** (Chinese Nanjing Diabetes Associations)" and that "***This cures more than 70% of patients*** (Korean Diabetes Association and Pharmacists Associations)."

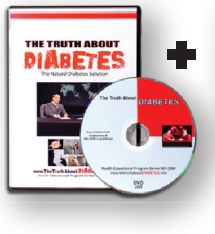
Many medical doctors around the world are using the P700 treatment on themselves, as well as, recommending this natural treatment to their patients and publishing scientific studies on their findings.
Dr. Sichel says "***This is a path finding discovery in the reversal of diabetes***" "***Hope for the complete cure finally begins***" says Dr. Ho, and Dr. Echano says "***I know that this is highly recommended by major international diabetes associations.***"

The efficacy and safety of this treatment is well recognized and established internationally. The Chinese equivalent of the US FDA issued an approval after rigorously performing animal, toxicology, and clinical tests on the products based on this natural treatment. A few governments followed suit. These approvals and permits cover 40% of world population now, and these products have been sold in more than 50 countries. The most reputed Chinese University, Tsinghua University, not only approved of this natural treatment, but also became the representative distributor in China.

There are approximately 30,000 websites that talk about this natural treatment.

$19.95 + $19.95 + $20.00





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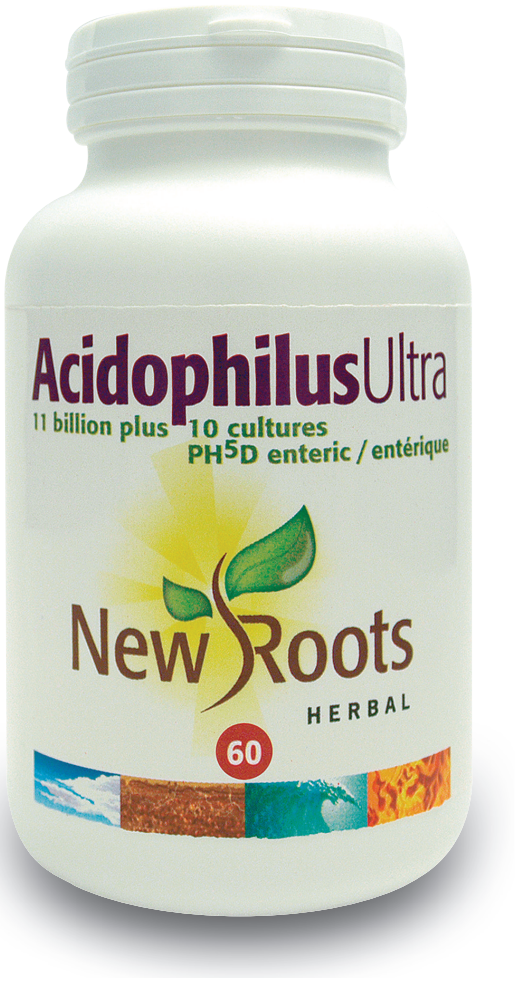

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Obesity through a straw

NUTRISPEAK Vesanto Melina MS, RD

Have you ever drank a 20-ounce soda? That's the size many adults and teens are drinking today. Or would you ever sit down and eat 16 teaspoons of sugar from a sugar bowl, one spoonful after another? When you drink a 20-ounce soda, you're consuming 16 teaspoons of sugar, the equivalent of a third of a cup.

In the 1950s, the typical size of a serving of soda pop was 6.5 ounces. Since the 1980s, when serving sizes of sweetened beverages swelled, they've continued to increase, with our body weight growing right along with them. For example, in addition to the amount of food you need to eat, if you drink one 20-ounce bottle of soda every day for a year, you'll gain 26 pounds.

Because beverages don't fill your stomach the same way solid food does, you can drink many calories without being aware of it. This makes it all too easy to gain weight. A 12-ounce can of Coke or Pepsi contains about 10 teaspoons of sugar. Twelve ounces of lemonade, fruit punch or soda pop contain anywhere between 120 to 180 calories, attributable to the high sugar content of eight to 11 teaspoons. One level teaspoon of sugar equals 16 calories. When you do the math, you see that drinking one 12-ounce can of sweetened pop every day for a year is the equivalent of eating 76 cups of sugar.

A 20-ounce serving of lemonade, fruit punch or soda pop contains 200 to 300 calories. With just one of these drinks, we get 10 to 15 percent of our required daily calories. If you drink several cans or bottles every day, you could consume as many as 900 calories, depending on your choice of beverage.

Research has shown that children who drink large quantities of sweetened drinks receive less of the important nutrients they need – protein, vitamin A, calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus – and gain excess weight because of the high caloric content in the sweet beverages.

So-called sports drinks and fruit punches can be expensive and as far as nutrition goes, you'll do better if you drink water and eat a banana with a handful of salted nuts. At least you'll be hydrated *and* have a healthy snack that provides protein, energy and B vitamins along with the minerals. Sports drinks and fruit punches, on the other hand, are comprised primarily of water, sugar, two minerals and perhaps some artificial colouring.

Read labels. The ingredient in the largest amount is listed first. Avoid drinks where sugar is the first ingredient or where it is the second ingredient listed after water. On some labels, both the second and third ingredients are sugars. When listed on a label, sugar can have many names. Look for words ending in "ose" in the list of ingredients: sucrose, fructose, dextrose and maltose. Also look for syrups, such as cane syrup, rice syrup, corn syrup and maple syrup. Watch for honey as well.

Some beverages that depict fruit on the label may contain very little fruit, if any at all. You have to read the label to see which ingredients the beverage contains. Avoid beverages such as fruit cocktails, fruit nectars, fruit drinks, fruit punches, slushes and those made with flavoured drink crystals. All of these contain too much sugar.

Artificial sweeteners have names like Splenda, sucralose, NutraSweet, aspartame, Sweet'N Low, SugarTwin, acesulfame potassium, Ace K, cyclamate, sucaryl, maltitol, sorbitol, xylitol, polydextrose, hydrogenated starch hydrolysates and isomalt. The soft drink industry would have us believe that a "diet" drink loaded with chemical sweeteners is healthy for us because it contains no calories!

The healthiest, calorie-free beverage you can drink is water. For added nutrition with very few calories, I would recommend you try drinking a vegetable juice. Tomato juice can be very refreshing.

Vesanto Melina is a dietitian and author of Becoming Vegetarian, Becoming Vegan, Raising Vegetarian Children, Food Allergy Survival Guide *and the new* Raw Revolution Diet. *Contact her Langley office to book a consultation: 604-882-6782, www.nutrispeak.com*

Would you ever sit down and eat 16 teaspoons of sugar from a sugar bowl, one spoonful after another? When you drink a 20-ounce soda, you're consuming 16 teaspoons of sugar, the equivalent of a third of a cup.

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Hand-picked in the Mediterranean, steam distilled and chemical free, WILD OREGANO C93 is an effective nutritional supplement to protect against colds, flu, bacteria, viruses and parasites.

Tribute to Ben Banky

On December 12, Ben Banky's life came to a sudden and tragic end when he was killed at his company's Christmas party. Forty-year-old Ben was co-founder, president and CEO of TallGrass Distribution. He was a friend to many and a kind and compassionate boss to those who worked for him. He will be sorely missed. The following letter from TallGrass pays homage to Ben's enormous contribution both as a friend and company leader and speaks of the impact Ben had on all who knew him.

Dear friends

It is difficult to adequately express in words the shock and pain we all feel from the sudden death of Ben Banky, our leader and friend. Ben will be deeply missed by all who knew him. We will miss his energy and enthusiasm, his generosity and his kindness, his extraordinary wit and his sheer brilliance.

In this time of crisis, we have been receiving an extraordinary outpouring of love and respect from across Canada and around the world. Thank you so much for all your calls and notes of sympathy and support; they are deeply appreciated. We've also been receiving some hilarious memories of Ben, and those are very much appreciated as well.

We would like to express that all of us at TallGrass are determined to carry forward Ben's vision and legacy. Our small company has suffered an enormous blow, and it is going to be difficult to move forward. But move forward we shall, because it's what Ben would have wanted, and because it's simply the right thing to do.

The TallGrass family has been gathering daily. This is a very tough time but there is much comfort in each other's company, and we are supporting each other as much as we can. We also talked about what we should do about going back to work, and we collectively decided that we will honour Ben by continuing to build the business he helped create. In that spirit, TallGrass has reopened. We have held a ceremony of purification and remembrance here in our offices and a room is now dedicated to Ben as shrine of remembrance and peace.

Once again, thank you for all your support and generosity.

Sincerely,
The TallGrass family

"We believe that we don't succeed unless the people around us succeed and the health of the planet not only doesn't suffer, but is improved by our work."

- Ben Banky

On winter solstice, the longest night of the year, hundreds trekked through Vancouver's biggest snowstorm to honour Ben Banky at his memorial tribute at Richards on Richards. People travelled from Hornby Island, Calgary, Toronto and L.A. to join together in this remembrance and celebration of Ben's amazing life and legacy. There wasn't an empty chair in the house; both the floor and balcony were packed. Throughout the evening, friends and colleagues shared their memories of Ben in an outpouring of appreciation for one so talented, gregarious and loved. Natasha Fahel, a TallGrass employee from Toronto, offered the following eulogy. – Joseph Roberts

Good evening everyone

My name is Natasha, and I, along with these lovely ladies am here on behalf of Ben's TallGrass family. We want to start by thanking Linda [Ben's wife] for granting us joint custody of Ben and bringing him so much happiness in the last several years. We want you to know that you are forever a member of the TallGrass family. Of course, we extend the same welcome to Ben's family as well.

If we have to find a silver lining in all of this, then it would be that this has brought an already close family closer together. As well, it brought us closer to our extended family in the community and in the health food industry, something that Ben strived to do everyday at TallGrass. We want to thank everyone for their overwhelming outpouring of love and support during this heartbreaking time.

Ben was a remarkable man, who lit up any room he walked into. His happiness was infectious and if his mood didn't get you, then one of his many stories would. He always chose the high road even if it wasn't the easiest or the most comfortable path. He was a leader who believed in the good in all of us. Ben had the integrity that all of us aspire to have and took the time to make everyone he met feel special, even if it was just to use your desk scissors to cut his toenails.

As a boss, as with every role in his life, Ben inspired us to do better and to be better. When speaking about him in the last week, the word mentor has come up frequently. But it was the way he mentored that made him so great. He didn't just want TallGrass to grow and be successful; he wanted all of us to be, as individuals. When he taught us something, it wasn't just for the benefit of the company, but for each of us to learn and grow from it. But don't take my word for it, take his. The following is an excerpt from a letter that that Ben wrote just last week, about his vision for TallGrass and its future:

"Traditionally, business has only looked at profit as a motive. We believe that we don't succeed unless the people around us succeed and the health of the planet not only doesn't suffer, but is improved by our work. The products we are engaging in selling are some of the most socially responsible out there. Through them, we are supporting healthy lifestyles, preventative medicine, organic agriculture and other businesses that share the same values. People are what make a company. We all need to be nurtured, given opportunities and made to feel both wanted and supported. People want to have fun with their work, but they also want to know that they are respected both for the work they do and as fellow citizens. Part of the fun of building a business is imagining what it will look like in the future and making that dream come true."

If Matt and Ben were a married couple – contrary to industry rumours, they weren't – then Matt is our father figure

and Ben our "mama bear." Ben was the nurturer, the one we went to when Matt said no.

TallGrass isn't just a place that we all work. Matt and Ben chose each of us to be part of the TallGrass family. We are who we are because of what they created and the vision that they shared together.

We will honour Ben and his legacy by working with Matt to continue building the dream they shared, with our strengthened sense of passion and our newly inspired purpose.

Ben was our Boss, our mentor and our friend. It was an honour to know him, a privilege to work for him and his acquaintance will always be one of our life's greatest gifts.

We love you Ben.

Julie Daniluk from The Big Carrot in Toronto remembers Ben

Ben charged into life. He lived like every day counted and made a greater impact in 40 years than many make in 80.

He loved to celebrate every occasion and was one of the most generous people in our industry. He just loved to give people an experience they would remember and for that we will never forget. Never forget how much he cared.

I remember him telling me the story of how he got his name. His grandfather came to North America, saw a movie poster and decided he liked the name "Banky" so much he changed their last name. The alliteration of his name made him sound like a great detective of an old English novel. It suited him perfectly because he was larger than life.

He started every statement in a CHFA board meeting with " I just have to ask." This exacting need to "flush out the detail" pushed the board to ensure all issues were exhausted before we decided a fair course. He has pushed us all to be better members. We will have to work harder to ask the tough questions that just came naturally to him.

I appreciate that he pushed so hard. He worked hard and played hard, but to many of us on the outside it was hard to know where one ended and the other began because so many of his clients and competitors were good friends. He brought a lightness of being to our lives, but in a heartbeat was also able to address the most serious issue with sensitivity and razor-sharp observation.

How will I remember him?

I will always order the good wine. I will always pay someone a compliment when it comes to mind. I will try to see the humour in the day even when it is grey like a winter day in Vancouver. I will charge in to a situation if I feel it is unjust...That's the only way I can learn from this brave and brash bandleader, Benjamin Banky.

Remembering Ben Banky – An industry pays a tribute

The CHFA has set up an interactive site to pay tribute to one of its greatest champions. Visit the CHFA homepage at www.chfa.ca and click on the button; you'll be redirected to the page where you can read posts from fellow colleagues and can comment on any post. To submit a post for possible inclusion, please email mherschorn@chfa.ca. All comments are moderated by the CHFA.

There are also many pages of remembrances of Ben also in the Legacy Guest Book on the web at www.legacy.com/can-vancouver/GB/GuestbookView.aspx?PersonId=121403860

TallGrass Ben Banky trust

In honour of Ben, a scholarship trust has been created to support progressive business and social entrepreneurship. We have received many requests for information as to how donations can be made to support this project, and we are very happy to be able to pass along the information: In lieu of flowers, the Ben Banky Trust is at CIBC, account# 00010/81-42998. Donations for the trust can also be sent C/O TallGrass Distribution Ltd., 40 5th Ave E, Vancouver, BC, V5T 1G8.

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...continued from p. 4

I was faced with paying off loans taken out by the previous mayor, for the financing of municipal projects of dubious value.

The banks refused to extend terms of payment and connived with City Council members to block alternative payment plans, such as the sale of city land or tax revenues. The banks knew the city couldn't otherwise pay. They demanded instead the sale of the city's electric system, Muny Light, to an investor-owned electric company, the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. (CEI). The president of the Cleveland Council, George Forbes, had met with the head of Cleveland Trust bank, who insisted on the sale of Muny Light as a precondition for extending the city credit. This was a case of the bank blackmailing the city, pure and simple.

The alternative to accepting the bank's blackmail was default. Cleveland could become the first city since the Depression to default on its financial obligations. Cities rely on credit for everyday operations and for meeting long-term financial obligations, such as infrastructure improvements. If banks called in their loans, the city would head toward dire straits. No one knew that better than the law firm of Squire Sanders and Dempsey, which had served as bond counsel for the city of Cleveland while the city entered fiscal peril and was simultaneously, though not coincidentally, the principal law firm for the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. Through Squire Sanders and Dempsey, CEI had access to the intricacies of the city of Cleveland's financial records.

Under the previous administration, the city began using bond funds for general operating purposes. As mayor, I inherited $40 million worth of debt that had to be refinanced before the end of my first year in office. Under my predecessor, the city had illegally spent money it did not have, and yet it had the key to every bank in town and the confidence of the bond rating houses, at precisely the same time it was preparing for the sale of the municipal electric system to CEI.

Cleveland Trust and another bank demanding the sale of Muny Light, National City, were principal stock owners in CEI. Several members of CEI's board sat on the boards of local banks as interlocking directorates. There was a myriad of bank-utility business relations. Cleveland Trust bank, which handled CEI's demand deposits, pension funds and other assets, would directly profit from the sale of Muny Light. In a way, the banks were the private utility. With the sale, CEI would have an electricity monopoly in Cleveland and would be able to name its price for electricity and get it. Everyone in the Muny Light territory would receive at least a 20 percent rate increase as the rates would be raised to CEI's levels.

The city was self-sufficient with Muny Light for many years. Muny provided power to 46,000 homes with low electric rates, which contributed to the economic growth of the city. That was until the late 1960s and early '70s, when

Representative Dennis Kucinich

a series of suspicious mechanical failures and power outages diminished the system's reliability. At that time, under heavy lobbying from CEI, the Cleveland City Council delayed the passage of legislation for $9.8 million in repairs to Muny Light's generators, thereby forcing the city to purchase power at a premium from its competitor, CEI. The city became increasingly dependent on an interconnection between CEI and Muny Light, a high-voltage line over which power could be transferred from CEI to the city, to ensure reliability. The city's power system began to experience more unexplained power failures. CEI began to make public overtures to purchase Muny Light. The sale of Muny Light to CEI was soon supported by most of Cleveland's media, business, political and labor interests.

In November 1976, the City Council passed legislation authorizing the sale of Muny Light for a fraction of its value. I was clerk of Cleveland's Municipal Court at the time and I objected to the sale. I was advised that there was no way to stop the sale, but I saw it differently. Cleveland had a long history of municipal power. I could sense a terrible injustice was being visited upon the people of the city by its leading institutions, which were conspiring to deprive the city of its public power system.

I organized a petition drive that attracted support from city neighborhoods served by Muny Light. A full civic campaign was born with an intense effort made under brutal weather conditions to gather the signatures necessary to put the issue on the ballot. There was much at stake besides the monetary value of the system: The people's right to own an electric system. And the historic position of Muny Light, one of America's first municipal electric utilities, founded 70 years earlier by Cleveland mayor Tom Johnson. Muny Light provided electricity to about one-third of the homes and businesses in the city at a peak savings of 20-30 percent over the rates charged by CEI. Additionally, Muny Light provided millions of dollars annually in savings to taxpayers by serving 76 city facilities. It also provided Cleveland's street lighting. High electric rates and higher taxes would follow if Muny were sold. The private sector was forcing the sale for its own profit at the expense of the community.

On January 4, 1977, the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (ASLB), in an anti-trust review required of any company applying to operate a nuclear power plant, ruled that CEI had conspired to put Muny Light out of business. CEI tried to force Muny Light into price-fixing and blocked Muny expansion, stopped the installation of Muny Light pollution-abatement equipment and forced the city to buy power it didn't need. In addition, the ASLB uncovered a CEI budget planning report for 1971 that spoke of a five-year plan "to reduce and ultimately eliminate" Muny Light.

The ASLB determined that CEI deliberately caused a Christmas season blackout on the Muny Light system and sent salesmen into Muny Light territory offering "reliable CEI service." The private utility illegally tripled the cost of purchased power, thereby driving up Muny Light's operating costs. CEI illegally blocked Muny Light's access to power from other companies, all in

continued p.17...

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ON THE GARDEN PATH Carolyn Herriot

ORGANICS

To understand just how disconnected we are from food today, consider that in the 1930s, 30 percent of Canada's population was actively involved in farming, while today it's only 1.6 percent. Also consider that while gardening is a major leisure activity in North America, only 10 percent of gardeners grow food. This shows how seriously disconnected we are from our food source, which has become an industrialized commodity shipped around the planet, thereby contributing to climate change.

It's amazing to think that activities as basic as growing and eating locally grown food could contribute so profoundly to the climate change solution. Think of the fossil fuel saved by not shipping the average plateful of food 2,000 kilometres. Think of what would happen to our collective consciousness if city dwellers grew their own food and reconnected to nature.

Is the abundance of cheap food nourishing us or compromising our health? We know that health is intrinsically connected to what we eat. When I see what's happening to kid's health – obesity, Type II diabetes and neurological learning disorders, such as autism and ADD – I think we should look more carefully at what we are eating.

I have come to the conclusion that food can only be REAL or not real. REAL conveniently stands for regional, environmentally responsible, agricultural land use. When organic farmers get back on the land and gardeners go back to organic vegetable plots, we'll get more "real" food on the table.

The good news is that reconnecting with food and health – and saving the planet in the process – is really simple; all that's required is a paradigm shift in thinking. For instance, if we start 2009 thinking about edible landscaping, we can have beautiful gardens and eat them too. If we planted food gardens in public spaces for all to see, and fruits and vegetables in our front yards, we would soon reconnect people (children especially) to the source of their food.

For specimen landscape trees, think figs, cherries, plums, almonds, olives, apples, crab apples, apricots and peaches. For groundcover, think strawberries, Miner's lettuce, chamomile and thyme. For hedges, you can have Sunroots (Jerusalem artichokes) – they fast-grow to six feet – ever-bearing raspberries and lavender or rosemary.

For vines, think Red Malabar climbing spinach – it grows 15 feet a year – hops *Humulus lupulus* (20 feet) and showy Painted Lady scarlet runner beans (10 feet). Thornless blackberries, kiwis and grapes make perfect edible ornamental vines and don't forget *Vitis purpurea* for its showy, deep purple leaves and grapes.

Small-scale regional food production puts the culture back into agriculture; this is what we can do by growing food up-front and personal.

For a bright splash of colour, plant clumps of chives with edible purple blossoms. Garlic chives are very attractive for their showy white or mauve starburst flowers. Grow calendula for its edible flower petals and borage for its blue cucumber flavoured flowers.

For a colourful border, plant a row of purple lettuce; lettuce comes in every texture, shape and colour. Last year, I came across several eye-catching food gardens on the boulevard and in people's front gardens. The sight of them stopped me in my tracks because I realized all it takes to move food from the back yard to the front is a transformation in thinking.

When people grow food in their front gardens, the result is colourful and ornamental. This brings neighbours together and soon leads to food and seed sharing and building friendships, which eventually leads to community. Small-scale regional food production puts the culture back into agriculture; it's what we can do by growing food up-front and personal.

I believe there's nothing better for us than the food we grow ourselves. There's no question that it's real and, best of all, it nourishes communities as well as individuals.

Happy edible landscaping in 2009!

Carolyn Herriot is author of A Year on the Garden Path: A 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide. *She grows "Seeds of Victoria" at the Garden Path Centre (www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath) from where she blogs the New Victory Garden online. www.gardenwise.ca*

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THE POWER OF NOW Eckhart Tolle

Your relationships will be changed profoundly by surrender. If you can never accept what is, by implication, you will not be able to accept anybody the way they are. You will judge, criticize, label, reject or attempt to change people. Furthermore, if you continuously make the Now into a means to an end in the future, you will also make every person you encounter or relate with into a means to an end.

The relationship – the human being – is then of secondary importance to you, or of no importance at all. What you can get out of the relationship is primary, be it material gain, a sense of power, physical pleasure or some form of ego gratification.

Let me illustrate how surrender can work in relationships. When you become involved in an argument or some conflict situation, start by observing how defensive you become as your own position is attacked, or feel the force of your own aggression as you attack the other person's position. Observe the attachment to your views and opinions. Feel the mental-emotional energy behind your need to be right and make the other person wrong. That's the energy of the egoic mind. You make it conscious by acknowledging it, by feeling it as fully as possible. Then one day, in the middle of an argument, you will suddenly realize that you have a choice and you may decide to drop your own reaction, just to see what happens. You surrender.

I don't mean dropping the reaction just verbally by saying, "Okay, you are right," with a look on your face that says, "I am above all this childish unconsciousness." That's just displacing the resistance to another level, with the egoic mind still in charge, claiming superiority. I am speaking of letting go of the entire mental-emotional energy field inside you that was fighting for power.

The ego is cunning so you have to be very alert, present and totally honest with yourself to see whether you have truly relinquished your identification with a mental position. If you suddenly feel very light, clear and deeply at peace, that is an unmistakable sign that you have truly surrendered. Then observe what happens to the other person's mental position, as you no longer energize it through resistance. When identification with mental positions is out of the way, true communication begins.

Non-resistance doesn't necessarily mean doing nothing. All it means is that any "doing" becomes non-reactive. Remember the deep wisdom underlying the practice of Eastern martial arts: Don't resist the opponent's force. Yield to overcome.

Having said that, "doing nothing" when you are in a state of intense presence is a very powerful transformer and healer of situations and people. In Taoism, there is a term called *wu wei*, which is usually translated as "actionless activity" or "sitting quietly doing nothing." In ancient China, this was regarded as one of the highest achievements or virtues. It is radically different from inactivity in the ordinary state of consciousness, or rather unconsciousness, which stems from fear, inertia or indecision. The real "doing nothing" implies inner non-resistance and intense alertness.

On the other hand, if action is required, you will respond to the situation out of your conscious presence.

The ego believes that in your resistance lies your strength, whereas, in truth, resistance cuts you off from Being, the only place of true power. What the ego sees as weakness is your Being in its purity, innocence, and power; the ego exists in a continuous resistance mode and plays counterfeit roles to cover up your "weakness," which, in truth, is your power.

Until there is surrender, unconscious role-playing constitutes a large part of human interaction. In surrender, you no longer need ego defences and false masks. You become very simple, very real. "That's dangerous," says the ego. "You'll get hurt. You'll become vulnerable." What the ego doesn't know, of course, is that only through the letting go of resistance, through becoming "vulnerable," can you discover your true and essential invulnerability.

Remember the deep wisdom underlying the practice of Eastern martial arts: Don't resist the opponent's force. Yield to overcome.

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Ego and parenting

UNIVERSE WITHIN Gwen Randall-Young

SPIRITUALITY

You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
– Kahlil Gibran

More than ever before, there now seems to be greater awareness about the ways in which an unchecked ego can create havoc in our lives. When we strive to remain conscious, we can utilize our inner observer to keep ego in check.

There are times, however, when ego's reaction is so strong and so swift it is as if the observer gets knocked out, perhaps not regaining consciousness for hours, days or even much longer regarding that particular situation. This is most likely to happen in our closest relationships.

One area where unconsciousness can show up in an otherwise evolving individual is parenting. When a child is born, this new soul comes into this world to make its own particular journey. Parents, of course, are a very important part of this journey, but it is not as much about them as they would like to think.

When people become parents, or sometimes even during the pregnancy, a couple begins to have visions for their child and, early on, they begin to shape the child according to their wishes and aspirations.

As the child grows, the parents' egos become very satisfied to the extent that the child's behaviour and ways of being are in alignment with what the parents want for the child. If the child does not live up to parental expectations, there is often dissatisfaction, frustration, disappointment and even anger. If the parents' egos are in full swing, they see the child as a reflection of themselves. They redouble their efforts to make the child "look good." I am reminded of a friend who, years ago, when her five-year-old daughter had dressed herself in a most "creative" ensemble, told the child that no daughter of hers would go out of the house looking like that!

As the child gets older, the involvement of parental egos may intensify. If the dad wants his son to be a hockey star, he can be hard on the child when he does not perform well. If the parents want their child to be an academic star, they may, when presented with a mark of 80 percent, ask why it was not higher.

An unaware ego can be very determined to get its way. It can "know" which career path is best for a child, despite the child's differing interests and protestations. This causes the young person to surrender and follow the career path that will please the parents, or go her own way and live with guilt and a feeling of letting down her parents, or become immobilized and depressed and do nothing.

As parents, our job is to give children good roots, but they must find their own wings and fly where their spirit leads them.

Ego can also do serious damage to the parent/child relationship when it has a strong negative reaction to the child's choice of life partner. Once again, the child can be made to feel guilty for following his or her own heart and true path.

To honour the souls of children, parents need to strive to maintain awareness of ego and when it is trying to satisfy itself through the child. It is helpful to think of the child as a plant that begins as a seed, with all of its potential and characteristics already locked inside. It needs only proper care, loving nurturing and attentiveness in order to blossom fully into its natural beauty.

As children grow, I think asking them more questions is more important than what we tell them. Ask them what they think, what they like and what they want to be when they grow up. When they are older, ask what inspires them, what they are passionate about, what gives their life meaning and what they would like to be remembered for.

As parents, our job is to give children good roots, but they must find their own wings and fly where their spirit leads them.

Gwen Randall-Young is a psychotherapist in private practice and author of Growing Into Soul: The Next Step in Human Evolution. *For articles, permission to reprint and information about her books and "Deep Powerful Change" personal growth/hypnosis CDs, visit www.gwen.ca*

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The heights of the fall

By Shakti Mhi

Dedicated to Daniel, who was there for me with his whole being.

My body was in motion, falling 30 feet down. As I fell, time didn't slow down; it simply stopped. Maybe because I fell at the speed of light, or when you take off from your usual orbit, the laws of nature cease to exist.

As I was in the air, I was very clear and relaxed. I thought, "Is this going to be the end?" I felt a bit disappointed as I was in the middle of teaching a yoga teacher training program and I had a few things to do in my life. I didn't resist the fall with my body; I let my body fall like a heavy pillow and I hit the rock on the ground. The impact was incredible; bones and flesh hitting the ground at a speed that is only meant for diving birds. I lost my breath but not my consciousness. I watched my body in its stillness; no air moved in or out. I knew at this moment I was entering a new era of my existence, but I wasn't sure if it was in the form of death or a new kind of life.

I wondered if the reason I was not breathing was because one of my ribs had pierced my lung. I decided to gather all the energy that was left in my broken body and force a deep inhale into my shocked lungs. There is a good reason why in Zen it says, "If you are aware of your breath, you are aware of the moment." I guess the last time I had been forced to inhale so intensely was when I was born. I felt so much joy when my lungs started to move, vacuuming the air in.

Illustration © Mahesh14

The aftermath

I knew my spine was broken and my next thought was, "Am I paralyzed?" I searched for my toes, but it wasn't easy to map them in my brain. I was determined to find the group of muscles responsible for moving my toes. I did and when they moved, I was in bliss. I checked my legs and was thrilled to feel them moving. My left hand was lying beside me with no life in it. Broken bones were exposed to the air covered with a jungle of dark mud. I thought of the long journey before me. I was on a small island off the main coast of Thailand that had no medical facilities and the only way back was on a tiny boat on a stormy ocean. Honouring my practice, I knew there was only one way for me to go through the ordeal: being in the moment.

Lying on the ground, waiting for an emergency team to arrive, I had to restrain my mind from leaving the moment and wildly galloping into the unbounded desert of fears, doubts, worries and the replay of moments that had past. I needed to be 100 percent focused, tuned in and crystal clear. I couldn't afford to lose any energy by letting my mind wander outside of the moment.

I knew at this moment I was entering a new era of my existence, but I wasn't sure if it was in the form of death or a new kind of life.

People carried me from the jungle to the beach and the pain was unbearable. I knew if I identified with the pain it would swallow me alive and I would lose consciousness. So I started to say loudly, "I am not this body and this pain is not me." I kept repeating it as a mantra until I established a state were I was fully able to watch the pain, knowing it was in my body and knowing that it was not me. It helped me to manage the pain as a separate thing from my self. When I was informed that it would take some time for the speedboat to arrive, I started to chant like there would be no tomorrow. I chanted so loudly that people started to move towards the beach thinking maybe there was a Satsang going on. I couldn't understand where this powerful voice came from in my broken, bleeding body. But I didn't care; my intense chanting established life in my injured body by evoking Prana and circulating it in my physical and energy bodies.

And the journey began – endless moments of awareness, bliss and gratitude for being alive. When I arrived at the hospital a few hours later, I was informed that it would take another six hours for the surgeon to fly in from Bangkok. I asked Daniel to remove the big clock from the wall across from my bed, as I needed to bend time to my own terms to survive the long wait. The next thing I heard was the surgeon explaining how serious the injury was. He suggested surgery for my spine. I went within my self and came back with an assertive command not to touch my spine, just to care for my hand. They respected my wish, but didn't support it.

What made this experience so powerful and spiritual is that I was forced to immerse fully into the moment and move beyond space and time, move beyond all concepts of pain and pleasure, of good and bad. I experienced each moment as it was.

Another significant aspect of my injury was watching the power of the mind when it was guided with intuition and cleared of all fears. My mind and I decided not to let any predictable diagnoses and bad news from the medical staff stop us from being creative in our dance of healing. Meditation, visualization, loud affirmations and tons of humour were my yoga practice, day and night. I was talking to my body and guiding it gently as it found its way back to a place of balance and health. I refused to remain on morphine and instead exercised changing the concept of pain into pleasure; after all, it is only a concept.

Long distance healing

Because we are all connected to each other on the energy level, healing from a distance works powerfully. Immediately following my event, many people in Thailand, including teachers, students, yogis and friends, meditated and sent me powerful energy to encourage rapid healing. The news travelled quickly from India to Vancouver and beyond and wonderful people sent me more and more energy. Lying in my hospital room, I felt strong vibrations moving along my spine, aware of a beautiful gold colour, healing my broken bones. Even though I was isolated, I felt connected to an ocean of high frequency vibrations. I could physically feel streams of energy entering my body. I owe my rapid healing to all the people that sent this wonderful, loving energy. Sometimes the energy felt so intense, I burst into tears of bliss and gratitude. Thank you all.

Shakti Mhi is the author of The Enigma of Self-Realization *and founder of Prana Yoga College International.*
www.pranayoga.com

...continued from p. 12

violation of federal antitrust law. As a condition of receiving its license to operate a nuclear power plant, CEI had to provide Muny Light with access to cheap power. Documents showed that CEI executives believed the purchase of Muny Light would increase CEI's earnings by $2.732 a share, eliminate a competitive threat, and push the company's growth rate to 10 percent, further enhancing investment.

Documents in the case also demonstrated CEI's successful attempts to subvert media editorial policy through cunning use of the company's large advertising budget. Over the years, several local reporters lost their jobs after writing reports unfavorable to CEI, and CEI bragged internally about placing verbatim company-written propaganda as general media editorial content.

Confronted with the federal finding that bolstered a previously filed $330 million antitrust damage suit, the Cleveland city administration's response was incredible: "Now CEI has to buy Muny Light!"

At the same time the campaign to sell Muny Light accelerated, a high-powered rifle shot ripped through my house, just missing my head.

A cavalcade of media editorials commenced favoring the transfer of Muny Light to CEI. During an ensuing legal battle over the validity of the referendum petitions, I became a candidate for mayor. I promised that if elected I would save the system. I won the election. My first act in office was to cancel the sale of Muny Light. I next had to pay off a $14 million CEI electricity bill that the previous administration owed and wanted to satisfy through the sale of the light system.

I had been in the mayor's office barely a year, facing a municipal horror story of huge snow storms, massive water main breaks and a police strike. I had cut city spending by 10 percent through eliminating corrupt contracts, payroll padding and attritional cutbacks. Through the year, I struggled with a recall attempt for firing a police chief. The recall was backed by banks, utility and real estate interests with a last minute appeal printed by the *Plain Dealer* to sell Muny Light. Credit rating agencies, which had looked the other way while CEI was attempting to gain Muny Light in the previous administration, downgraded the city's finances.

Another Muny Light-related attempted assassination was averted when I was rushed to a hospital vomiting blood from a profusely bleeding ulcer. Some years later, a congressional investigation produced information from an undercover agent of the Maryland State Police that the assassination attempt was to occur while I was the grand marshal in a local parade. A local television investigative report claimed the assassin's services were purchased because I refused to sell the electric system.

One month later, I was back at work trying to find a way to save Muny Light. The utility's financial difficulties, though contrived largely through interference with the system by CEI, were depicted as so overwhelming that only the sale of the electric system itself would save the city from financial catastrophe. I held several meetings with bank officials and it became clear we were heading for trouble on the question of refinancing. The banks were going to try to force me to sell the electric system. I went public with a plea for an income tax increase to protect the city's solvency.

On December 15, I made a last-minute appeal to Cleveland Trust. It was eight o'clock in the morning. I met with Brock Weir, the chairman of Cleveland Trust, council president Forbes and our host, a local businessman. I had the intention of protecting Muny Light and avoiding a default.

"There's just one thing you've got to do," said the council president, who strongly favored the sale.

Weir, the bank CEO with the stern visage: "If you sell Muny Light, we'll roll over the notes. I can get you $50 million in new financing. We'd get other banks to participate." It was a bribe.

My thoughts went to the street just outside the boardroom. Some 20 years earlier, a few blocks from where this meeting was taking place, I slept with my brothers and sister and parents in a car, homeless. I remembered an apart-

continued p.34...

It matters how much people pay for electricity. It matters if the public owns its own system and has political and financial control over rates. I could hear the pennies dropping, click, click, click, as Mr. Weir insisted on the sale of Muny Light. I remembered my family and the struggles of people like them. I couldn't do it. I couldn't sell. Not for $50 million, not for anything.

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The chi of chickens

EARTHFUTURE Guy Dauncey

ENVIRONMENT

We keep chickens – five mature females and two youngsters – who we think are roosters. That spells possible trouble ahead, since the roosters may fight once they mature, but right now they are total buddies, scouting the garden for bugs, seeds, worms and anything else that pleases a young chicken's palate.

These are some happy chickens. They have a custom-made home I made using a plan from a 1948 British gardening book, with cozy roosting boxes and a shaded space where they can shelter from the rain. For much of the year, however, we open the gate, giving them an acre of rural land to wander.

I never thought much about chickens before we had them. To see them in their free state has been a revelation. Every day they explore the garden, clean up fallen birdseed and scratch for bugs everywhere. In summer they jump for the lowest-hanging raspberries. These are wild birds that humans have domesticated; they are the closest living relatives of the dinosaur.

After a morning of hunting and gathering, they look for a quiet place with whatever sun they can find to lie in; our dog and cats don't bother them.

Their *chi* – their life energy – is healthy and alive. It is so satisfying to see how they enjoy their daily explorations, how they bond together and how they play their little pecking order games, just as humans do. How they rush to hide a tasty morsel of food, trying their best to eat it in private. How they clearly enjoy their lives. And how they chatter – chickens make up to 200 different sounds, using 30 different phrases.

When dusk falls, they slowly make their way back to the henhouse; there's always one who lingers for the last bug. One of our young cockerels has decided he prefers to roost in a tree so he makes an effortful jump-fly into the branches of the maple that overhangs the coop.

We're vegetarian so we keep our chickens for their eggs, which they announce with a squawk. When they stop laying, we keep them till they die - or are killed, alas. We live in the country where mink, eagles, hawks and raccoons all fancy a tasty chicken, if they can catch one.

Contrast this with the life of a captive chicken, forced, if it's laying, to spend its whole short life in a cage the size of a piece of paper, stacked on high with 30,000 other birds. If it's a broiler, raised for its meat, it is crammed in a space so crowded that each fellow chicken has an average of just 550 square centimetres (9 inches by 9 inches) in which to live out its entire life. Being crammed so tightly, they peck each other. To prohibit them, the ends of their upper and lower beaks are forcibly cut off, using an electrically heated blade.

In Britain, during the run of celebrity chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's TV series, *Hugh's Chicken Run*, residents of the Devon town of Axminster were invited to see free-range and intensive systems alongside each other in a shed. Many people left in tears and half of the four million viewers who saw the shows said they would only buy free-range chicken.

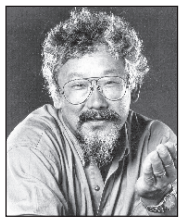
This is our doing, driven by profit and the desire for a cheap chicken wing, regardless of the pain it causes. We cause the birds' suffering and we can end it, if we choose.

Sweden banned battery cages in 1995, Austria in 2004, Germany in 2007 and all of Europe will do so in 2012. In California, voters in November's elections approved a motion to end the use of battery cages, as well as cramming veal calves and breeding pigs into cages and crates so small that the animals cannot turn around or fully extend their limbs.

What about Canada? Which of our politicians will speak up for the chickens? They are awaiting our choice to set them free.

Sweden banned battery cages in 1995, Austria in 2004, Germany in 2007 and all of Europe will do so in 2012... What about Canada?

Guy Dauncey is co-author with Ethan Smith of Building an Ark: 101 Solutions to Animal Suffering *(New Society Publishers, www.earthfuture.com/ark). He lives in Victoria and has published* EcoNews *as a monthly newsletter since 1991. Sign up for free at www.earthfuture.com/econews*



If I had a trillion dollars

SCIENCE MATTERS David Suzuki with Faisal Moola

Many of you are working to recycle, reduce energy consumption and improve the world for your families and neighbours. The collective impact of these many small efforts is making a big difference.

Just think what you could do with $4.1 trillion.

That's how much the US and 17 European countries are spending to bail out financial institutions involved in a crisis that began in the US and now reverberates around the world. The final amount will likely be a lot more. It's difficult to fathom such a large number, but consider that one trillion seconds is about 32,000 years. To top it off, most of the details are secret; we don't really know what the money is being used for, although it probably hasn't stopped your retirement savings funds from plummeting.

Climate change is so important that we cannot use the financial and economic crisis as a pretext for dropping it.

The effect on people in developing nations is even worse. Most of them didn't have savings to begin with; now, the economic crisis, coupled with the effects of the climate crisis, including drought and food shortages, is causing more of our human family to suffer from extreme poverty and joblessness.

Just think what they could do with $4.1 trillion.

A report from the Institute for Policy Studies, *Skewed Priorities: How the Bailouts Dwarf Other Global Crisis Spending*, points out that the amount is 40 times what the US and Europe are spending in developing nations on programs to deal with poverty ($90.7 billion) and climate change ($13.1 billion, none of it from the US). In fact, the US spent far more to bail out insurance firm AIG ($152.5 billion) than all the countries together spent on developmental aid last year.

And what did the AIG executives do after getting the taxpayer-funded bailout? They celebrated with a $440,000 trip to a luxury spa resort. The cost of the trip is about what the US spent on food aid last year to Lebanon, "a country struggling to recover from conflict," according to the IPS.

If we think we needn't worry about what happens to developing nations because it isn't affecting us, we should remind ourselves that just as everything in nature is connected, so is everything in our global economic and political systems. Increased international job competition and reduced export opportunities are just two of the smaller impacts mentioned in the IPS report.

But the worst meltdown isn't the global economy. Another report, *Climate Safety*, from the Public Interest Research Centre, shows that the Arctic's late-summer ice is melting much faster than scientists predicted and may disappear within three to seven years. The cascading consequences of such an event could be catastrophic.

Just think what we could do with $4.1 trillion.

Instead of giving companies these huge sums of money so they can continue bbuying and selling, merging and paying their executives obscene salaries and bonuses, we could put it toward renewable energy, sustainable urban planning, and research into ways to lessen the impact of climate change – things that really would stimulate economies.

Canada has continued to bolster its reputation as a country lacking in imagination and concern for the planet. Environment minister Jim Prentice told Alberta business leaders recently, "We will not aggravate an already weakening economy in the name of environmental progress." His job is to protect the environment yet he sounds like the minister of finance.

But if Canada is hindering progress other nations are showing more enlightened leadership. French president Nicolas Sarkozy said before heading to Poland [for the United Climate Change Conference in December] that nations must keep their commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions: "Climate change is so important that we cannot use the financial and economic crisis as a pretext for dropping it."

As citizens, we can and must do everything possible to keep our finite world alive and healthy. Along with changes we are making in our own lives, we must also call on our leaders to stop downplaying the unequivocal science that tells us failing to quickly address the climate crisis will make the economic crisis seem like a minor blip in history.

We could tell them where to put that $4.1 trillion.

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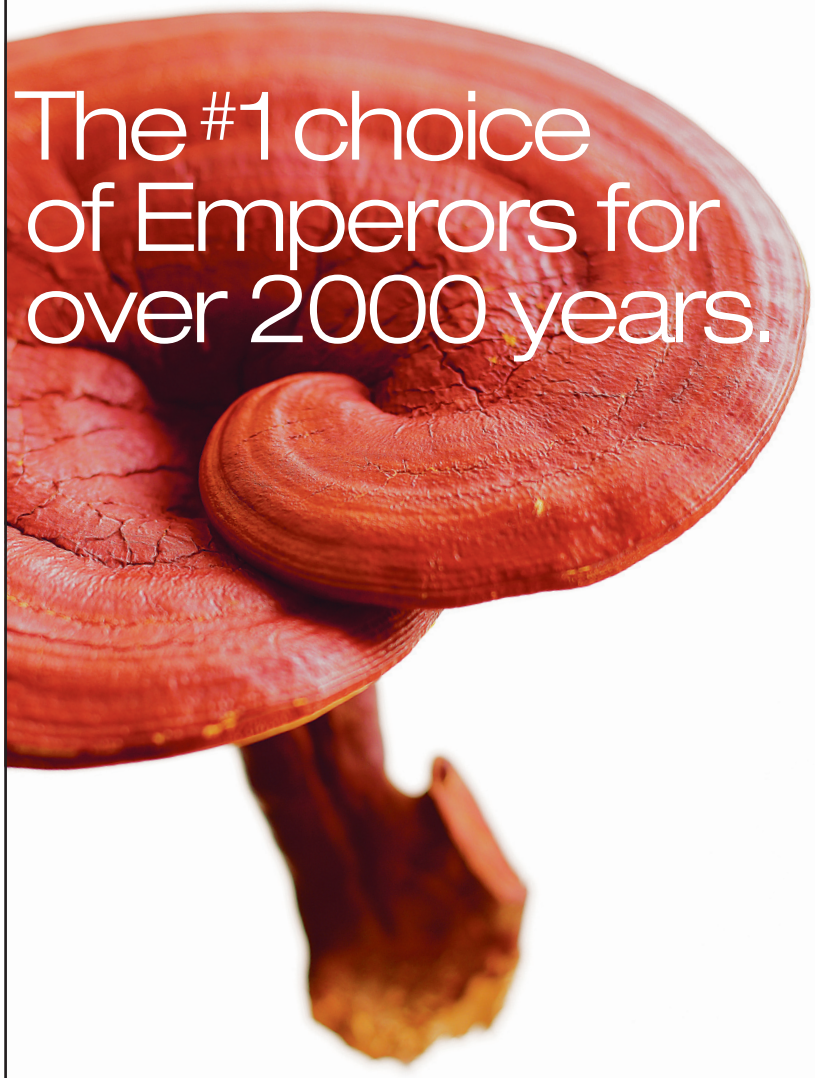

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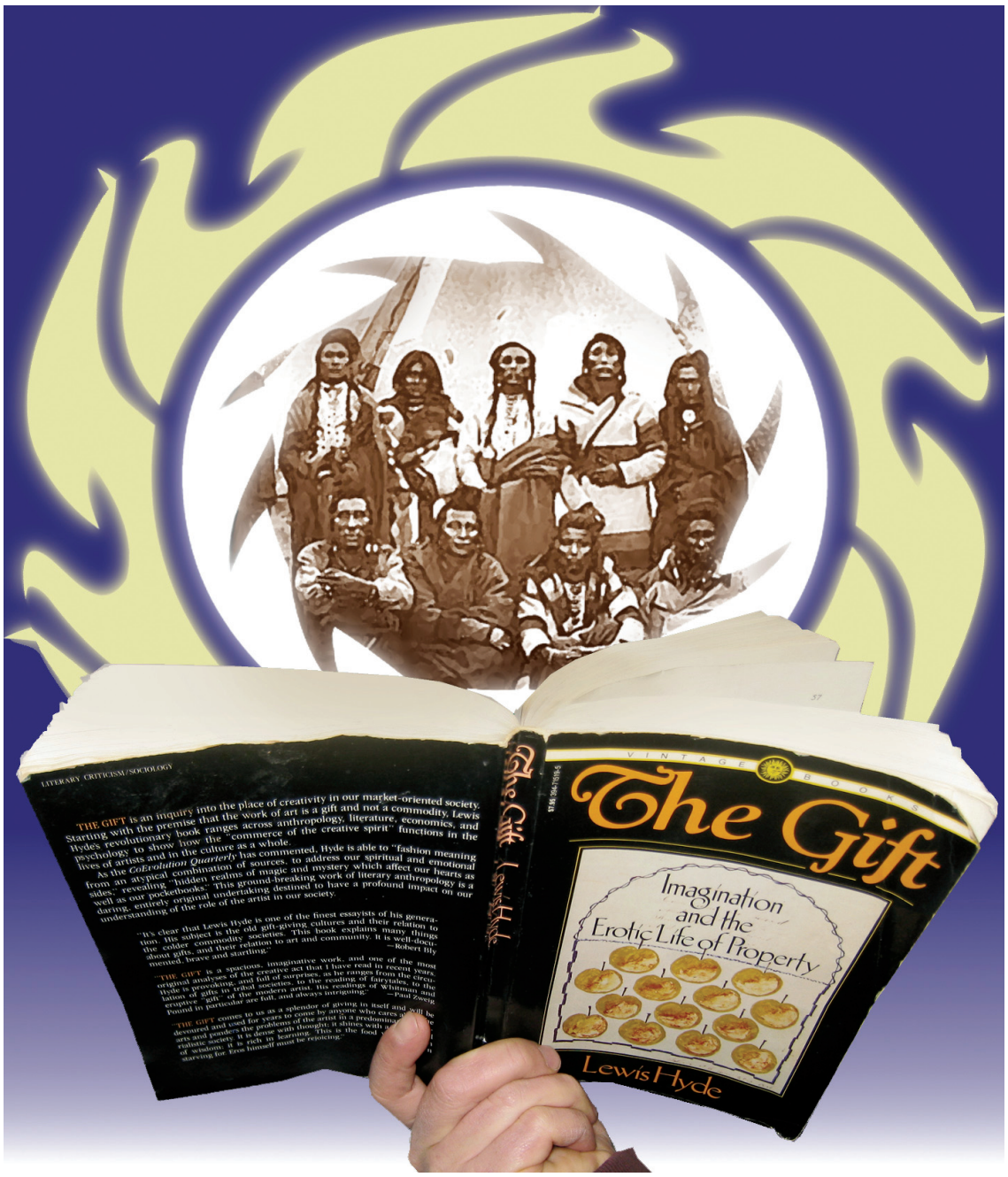
The gift

The nature of real abundance

art and text by Geoff Olson


LITERARY CRITICISM/SOCIOLOGY
THE GIFT is an inquiry into the place of creativity in our market-oriented society. Starting with the premise that the work of art is a gift and not a commodity, Lewis Hydes revolutionary book ranges across anthropology, literature, economics, and psychology to show how the "commerce of the creative spirit" functions in the lives of artists and in the culture as a whole.
As the CoEvolution Quarterly has commented, Hyde is able to "fashion meaning from an atypical combination of sources, to address our spiritual and emotional sides," revealing "hidden realms of magic and mystery which affect our hearts as well as our pocketbooks." This ground-breaking work of literary anthropology is a daring, entirely original undertaking destined to have a profound impact on our understanding of the role of the artist in our society.
"It's clear that Lewis Hyde is one of the finest essayists of his generation. His subject is the old gift-giving cultures and their relation to the colder commodity societies. This book explains many things about gifts, and their relation to art and community. It is well-documented, brave and startling."
—Robert Bly
"THE GIFT is a spacious, imaginative work, and one of the most original analyses of the creative act that I have read in recent years, and full of surprises, as he ranges from the circulation of gifts in tribal societies, to the reading of fairytales, to the erupitve "gift" of the modern artist. His readings of Whitman and Pound in particular are felt, and always intriguing."
—Paul Zweig
"THE GIFT comes to us as a splendor of giving in itself and will be devoured and used for years to come by anyone who cares about the arts and ponders the problem of the artist in a predominantly capitalistic society. It is dense with thought; it shines with a kind of wisdom; it is rich in learning. This is the food of which the world is starving for. Eros himself must be rejoicing."
VINTAGE BOOKS
The Gift
Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property
Lewis Hyde

Although it's a relatively obscure book, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* is considered something of an underground classic in literary and artistic circles. Canadian writer Margaret Atwood reportedly keeps half a dozen copies of Lewis Hyde's book on hand for friends and acquaintances. Other fans of *The Gift* include writer Zadie Smith, Michael Chabon, Jonathan Lethem and singer-songwriter Bruce Cockburn, who was inspired by the book to write a song of the same name.

In a recent article in *The New York Times Magazine*, Daniel B. Smith observes that *The Gift* has been "adopted as something like the theory bible" of the Burning Man festival, a yearly gathering of artists in the Nevada desert where money is replaced by barter. Video artist pioneer Bill Viola says he remembers New York artists exchanging dog-eared, marked-up copies of Hyde's book back in the eighties. My personal copy, which I found a few years ago in a used bookstore in Vancouver, looks like it has been through the wringer, literally. It's underlined in pen and pencil throughout and the back pages are corrugated from water damage. It obviously passed through a few hands before it got to mine.

It's difficult to summarize this cross-disciplinary, yet lyrical book. The first part of *The Gift* examines patterns of gift exchange in aboriginal societies. The second part explores the role and place of creative artists in a market-oriented world. In essence, Hyde's book is one of the few studies ever made of the cultural anthropology of giving. It's an ode to abundance, at both the communal and psychic level. Hyde's work was partly inspired by the work on reciprocity by sociologist Marshall Sahlins, one of the first academics to question the classic definition of economics as "the science of choice under scarcity." Sahlin's words, quoted in *The Gift*, are as relevant today as they were in 1924:

"Modern capitalist societies, however richly endowed, dedicate themselves to the proposition of scarcity…The market-industrial system institutes scarcity, in a manner completely unparalleled and to a degree nowhere else approximated. Where production and distribution are arranged though the behavior of prices, and all livelihoods depend on getting and spending, insufficiency of material means becomes the explicit, calculable starting point of all economic activity." Early economists Paul Samuleson and Milton Friedman both begin their textbook examination of economics with the "Law of Scarcity," and, as Hyde dryly observes, "It's all over by the end of Chapter One." In contrast, the work of early twentieth century anthropologists like Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski demonstrates that the person in aboriginal cultures deemed worthy of respect and adulation is not the one who accumulates the most possessions, but the one who gives them all away. Among the Trobriand Islanders, Hyde discovered, it could take as long as 20 years for a necklace or armband to circulate around the islands and return to its original owner. Such objects were never intended as possessions to be hoarded, but rather as prizes to cherish for a time and then pass on.

Hyde determined that, in aboriginal societies, "gifts are a class of property whose value lies not only in their use, but "which literally cease to exist as gifts" if they are not understood as part of a communal network of reciprocal relationships. They are material expression of immaterial sympathy. Even though gift cycles were never the sum total of aboriginal market relations, early explorers and settlers were puzzled by exchanges that generated no discernible profit.

In the first colonies of Massachusetts, the Puritan settlers were so puzzled by the natives' unique concept of property that they gave it a name, which had long been in circulation by the time Thomas Hutchinson's 1764 history of the colony. "An Indian gift," he told his readers, "is the proverbial expression signifying a present for which an equivalent return in expected." Hyde points out that the opposite of "Indian giver" would be something like "white man keeper" or "capitalist." In other words, "a person whose instinct is to remove property from circulation, to put in a warehouse or museum (or, more to the point for capitalism, to lay it aside to be used for production.)"

The gift, by its nature, breaks down boundaries. This has been its principle function in archaic societies: to put the tribe into accord, not just with one another, but also with the larger world of animals, spirits or gods. This is obviously not comparable to western gift giving, which usually entails two individuals

exchanging a gift. According to Hyde, the minimum number for a gift circle is three.

Australian Aborigines commonly refer to their own clan as "my body," using a personal expression of enlarged identity – just as we do in a marriage ceremony when we speak of "one flesh." "When we are in the spirit of the gift, we love to feel the body open outward," the author adds. In contrast, the assumptions of modern-day market exchange "may not necessarily lead to the emergence of boundaries, but they do in practice." Today, these boundaries are even more obvious, not just in the enormous disparities between rich and poor nations, but within these nations themselves. And there are other more subtle boundaries, such as the walls we create between one another and within our own hearts and minds, as we internalize the values of commodification. The word "citizen," which connotes communal participation, nets a little over a million hits in Google, while the word "consumer," which connotes social isolation and material attachment, nets almost three million. That's an intriguing measure of how we've come to define ourselves, at this critical point in planetary history.

The Internet is the closest thing we have to aboriginal gift cycles…it has come to embody the ancient, archetypal habit of giving freely to strangers. From message boards to "wikis," Internet users are willing to help each other, even though they don't really have to and don't get paid for it.

With the academic assumption that all human relations take place within a matrix of diminishing possibilities, it's no surprise that the world dominated by electronic capital has come to resemble its theoretical foundations in scarcity. They don't call economics "the dismal science" for nothing.

But is scarcity really such a permanent condition for human beings? As American author and philosopher Robert Anton Wilson once observed, "Known resources are not given by nature; they depend on the analytical capacities of the human mind. We can never know how many resources can be obtained from a cubic foot of the universe: all we know is how much we have found thus far, at a given date. You can starve in the middle of a field of wheat if your mind hasn't identified wheat as edible. Real Wealth results from Real Knowledge, which is increasing faster all the time."

Technological invention depends on a class of cultural creatives not included by Hyde in his book: inventors, technicians and scientists. Yet we owe the makeup of the modern world almost entirely to their ambiguous gifts to society, from penicillin to plutonium, from airbags to armaments. And in recent years, the worlds of artists and technicians have begun to merge with digital technology. The accelerating pace of change has kept the cultural creatives, from songwriters to computer animators, scrambling to find their place in a fast-changing world. And as media monopolies look at their plunging circulation and sales figures, regrouping and selling off their failing properties, the Internet has remained an open portal for a wide range of creativity.

Ironically, the Internet is the closest thing we have today to aboriginal gift cycles. In spite of its downside, it has come to embody the ancient, archetypal habit of giving freely to strangers. From message boards to "wikis," Internet users are willing to help each other, even though they don't really have to and they don't get "paid" for it in credit. The open-source movement, in which anonymous programmers tinker with and improve publicly accessible software code, and the "CopyLeft" movement to introduce a "creative commons" for freely distributed artistic works, defy not only traditional market economics, but all previous expectations of how people are supposed to behave in a market economy. Who voluntarily works for free, wanting only to contribute to a greater good? Millions, apparently. Homo economicus is not supposed to act this way.

But can anything considered traditional wealth come from offering services for free, as gifts? It's all well and good for those who have the leisure or financial security to contribute for free. But how can any viable economic model emerge from such altruistic activity? Or could it be that our ideas about economics are limited, or even false? "Basically, it's the problem that occurs when people focus too hard on the idea that economics is the study of resource allocation in the presence of scarcity. That only makes sense when there's scarcity – and in digital goods, scarcity doesn't exist," notes blogger Mike Masnick in his *Tech Dirt* column.

Masnick is referring to how the digital age has brought about endless copying of movies, songs, software programs and other intellectual property. The costs of reproducing these creative works have essentially dropped to nothing, now that they can be reduced to a string of ones and zeroes. Prior to the digital age, an average civic cinema could only show films that would attract a little more than a thousand people over two weeks, most of whom live within a few mile radius. For the most part, this has limited screenings to major distribution films. Yet DVDs extend the shelf life of films, with the cost of a rental less than that of a movie ticket. With digital downloads, the costs per movie shrink further but the potential orders increase as well.

Wired editor Chris Anderson calls this tapering of cultural production "the long tail." EBay is another long-tail business, Anderson says: "It is not about auctioning a few old masters for 20 million pounds apiece; it's about providing a market where huge numbers of people can sell almost anything for a couple of quid." There are physical limits on how many titles a shop can stock or a cinema can screen. But in a digital age, there are no such limits. Abundance, paradoxically, could be highly disruptive force in the traditional economy, as file-sharing networks and DVD knockoff shops have demonstrated. A number of tech bloggers are calling for a "new economics of abundance" so that civil society can shape its influence without legislatively killing its spirit.

It may sound absurd to speak of "abundance" in a time of a global economic collapse, environmental crisis, naked political opportunism and endless resource wars. Not only that, to praise technology uncritically is as one-sided as the patronizing worship of aboriginal cultures. Digital technology can isolate its users as much as it can connect them. If there really is an emerging economics of abundance, it will likely be a double-edged sword, with new problems of its own. But there is also the possibility it may offer an alternative to the worst excesses of monopoly capitalism and privatized kleptocracy. The way into a better future is to make past ways of doing things obsolete.

The real irony is that classical economics has always promised abundance through the management of scarcity. The SUV, the 50-inch television and the McMansion in a gated community have certainly been signifiers of middle-class comfort, but not sustainable wealth or social capital. In the past century, even reciprocal gift giving has been co-opted by the market, with the ostensible warmth and sentimentality of the Christmas season belied by the retailers' bottom line, and the perfunctory mass-march of consumers for Christ.

Scarcity economics has both authorized and valorized our methods for emptying the world of its natural capital, while ensuring indebtedness – personal, national and ecological – is the norm. So it's no accident that this dark vision of the world has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. With the threat of very real scarcity looming on the horizon – not just in credit, but in arable land, fresh water and other species – never before have so many of the world's people been so ready for new ways in thinking and organizing their lives.

And the new ways are having an effect, at least in the area of power production. Almost weekly, there is news about leaps in the efficiency of solar power technology, as the costs of solar and wind devices continue to plunge. Solar power use is doubling every two years and will be the dominant form of energy source within the next 20 years, according to respected inventor and author Ray Kurzweil. Sunlight can't be metered and it's hard to imagine nations going to war to grab an enemy's photons. Solar will soon be price competitive with the cheapest form of energy: coal. There is no way that "King Cong" – coal, oil, nuclear and gas – can compete with nature's other bounty, with the gift we've always had all around us, its access limited only by our imaginations. The current economic downturn, along with the plunging price of oil, may slow the acceleration of this trend for a time, but as long as civilization lasts, it is unlikely to be anything but exponential and socially transformative.

Some argue that even without theorizing new technologies, it is conceivable that there already exists enough energy, raw materials and biological resources to provide a comfortable lifestyle for every person on Earth. That may well be so, but if further technological advances are only to serve further population growth, as they have in the past, the gains will eventually take us back up against the biosphere's natural limits. Technological advance has to serve a higher purpose than endless growth. The mind must come into accord with the heart, and here Hyde's work is instructive. Ancient patterns of communal gift giving acknowledge the true sources of wealth:

"Every participant in the (gift-giving) cycle literally lives off the others with only the ultimate energy source, the sun, being transcendent. Widening the study of ecology to include man means to look at ourselves as part of nature again, not its lord. When we see that we are actors in natural cycles, we understand that what nature gives to us in influenced by what we give to nature. So the circle is a sign of an ecological insight as much as of gift exchange. We come to feel our selves as part of a larger self-regulating system.

"And where we have established such a relationship we tend to respond to nature as part of ourselves, not as a stranger or alien available for exploitation. Gift exchange brings with it, therefore, *continued p. 22…*

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Letters to the editor

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A customer

Be the change

Dear Dhammanusari: (those who love Truth)

Mahatma Gandhi said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." When an individual first starts to walk a spiritual path, they find that, in contrast to the loving kindness they are trying to develop, they see more negativity in the world and in the people around them. Perhaps negativity that they did not even see before. This may seem puzzling at first and it can be quite frustrating. It seems almost as if the decision to become spiritual has made that person into a negativity "crap" magnet. This is not the truth; the negativity is just standing out more, in contrast to the chosen goal of loving (spiritual) growth.

This occurs mostly because people who have chosen growth are not also choosing anything alternatively for themselves (in kamma formations i.e. ways of action) and are giving into what appears to be true, rather than seeking out the real and greater truth. The world comes along and presents a person with reasons for dissatisfaction; they have no basis to experience anything else. So people mostly choose the very things that are so dissatisfying to focus upon and hence live them out (in experience).

This is not uncommon; Mother Teresa, herself, did the same thing in her early years. It was decades before she "awakened" to see it differently. (She had a mindset in the beginning times of her work that all came from love. Then looking at the world, it saddened her to see what others were doing in, amidst and with that love). We too look at the world and see all the selfish things that people do and know that we all could be doing better. This, for those walking a path, is not in any way judgemental, but rather it is a sadness, a disparity, a frustration, with what is and what could be.

These frustrations occur because of the difference between what is "wanted" (spiritually and otherwise) in that person's life and how it is actually accomplished. What does this mean? You must "Be the change you wish to see."

Most lovingly and respectfully,
Namo Amitabha, don

...The Gift, continued from p.21

a built-in check upon the destruction of its objects: with it we will not destroy nature's renewable wealth except where we also consciously destroy ourselves."

If the economy of abundance isn't strangled in its cradle – and it looks like we're too far down the road for that to be possible – can it find rapprochement with the economy of scarcity, or even displace it entirely? Beyond that, there's the question of what forms it will take, and if we can join the archaic wisdom of aboriginal gift cycles with the promise of computer technology. Some futurists have floated the idea of "energy credits" or some other notational unit to replace money. Others see nanotechnology, automated manufacturing at microscales, as freeing humans at last from the boom-bust cycles of scarcity capitalism. But, at this stage, it's too early to see anything other than the vaguest outlines of a world evolving past free market monopolies and defunct, Soviet-style central planning. Given the many threats on the horizon, we may never get there, but it's the business of the future to be unknown.

"Greed and completion are not the result of immutable human temperament, writes Bernard Lietaer, founder of the EU currency system. "Greed and fear of scarcity are in fact being created and amplified…the direct consequence is that we have to fight with each other in order to survive."

Ultimately, the human relationship with the world is in part conditioned by how we interpret it – as one principally of scarcity or abundance. Perhaps one day we'll realize we're the custodians of life, but not its keepers, and we can wave goodbye to this shadow realm of hungry ghosts, fighting for pieces of paper decorated with the portraits of dead leaders. Singer-songwriter Bruce Cockburn summed up the distinction between these competing visions in his Lewis-inspired song, *The Gift*:

In this cold commodity culture
Where you lay your money down
It's hard to even notice
That all this earth is hallowed ground
The gift keeps moving
Never know where it's going to land
You must stand back and let it
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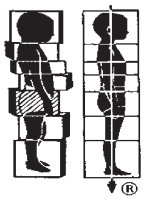

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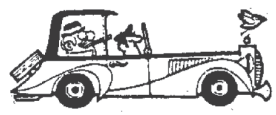

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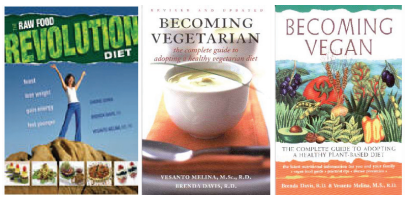

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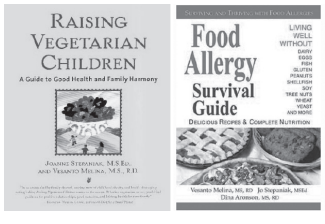

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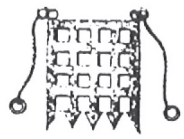

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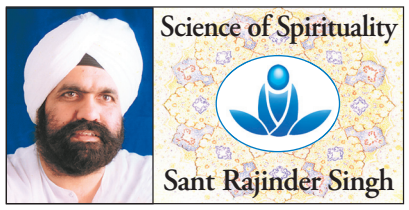

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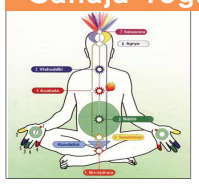

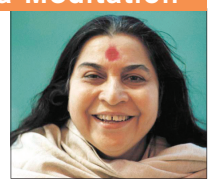

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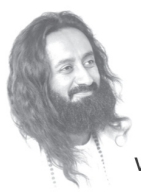

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INDEPENDENT MEDIA Steve Anderson

Perhaps more than anything else, the open Internet allows us to envision and actually produce a more democratic media system. But the open Internet is under threat by the very companies that bring it into our homes and workplaces: the Internet Service Providers (ISPs). These big telecommunication companies want to become the gatekeepers of the Internet, charging hefty fees to reach large audiences as they do with other mediums.

Big telecom companies are trying to do away with the governing guidelines of the Internet – known as net neutrality or common carriage – which require that Internet service providers not discriminate, including speeding up or slowing down Web content, based on its source, ownership or destination. Net neutrality protects our ability to direct our own online activities and also maintains a level playing field for online innovation and social change.

The activity of limiting, or slowing access to specific content and services, is referred to as "traffic shaping" or "throttling" and it fundamentally changes how the Internet works. According to Michael Geist, the Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-commerce Law, ISPs already have a "history of blocking access to contentious content (Telus), limiting bandwidth for alternative content delivery channels (Rogers) and raising the prospect of levying fees for priority content delivery (Bell)."

The importance of net neutrality was made clear when Bell Canada's traffic "throttling" began limiting users' ability to view the CBC's hit show *Canada's Next Great Prime Minister*. Some users claimed it took more than a day to download the show. In addition to manipulating its own customers' use of the Internet, Bell also "shapes" traffic passing through its network from independent ISPs like Teksavvy Solutions, thereby also limiting one of its few competitors in offering open access to the Internet.

The Canadian Association of Internet Providers (CAIP) stood up for independent ISPs by sending a formal request to the CRTC, urging them to order Bell to cease and desist from throttling its competitors' Internet service. Unfortunately, on November 20, the CRTC ruled that Bell could continue to throttle independent ISPs who interconnect with its network. The CRTC's ruling acts to limit competing ISPs from offering differential services, like providing access to the open Internet.

The battle continues; the CRTC recently announced a new public hearing on the wider issue of traffic shaping ("throttling"). Many of the anti-consumer aspects of the Bell/CAIP decision could be reversed if the traffic shaping hearing comes down in the public's favour.

When social entrepreneurs and public interest organizations in Vancouver aimed to create an innovative online news organization (*The Tyee*) in the most concentrated media market in North America, they didn't have to ask for ISP permission. Likewise, when the new Toronto-based, global, independent news organization, *theREALnews,* wanted to experiment with real-time online debate formats, it did not need to pay expensive distribution costs; it just began streaming its content. Similarly, when *Rabble.ca* wanted to create its own online national TV station, it didn't need to pay exorbitant fees for a TV station; it just innovated by using the online tools available. These projects would not exist if the Internet were not an open medium. What's worse, the next *Tyee, theREALnews* or *Rabble.ca* won't exist if we don't have an open, neutral network. When we lose the open Internet, we lose the freedom to innovate.

Let's be clear; this is not a battle between big ISPs and CAIP. This is not a battle between big ISPs and Google. This is not just a battle between big ISPs and their own customers. This is a battle between a handful of big telecom companies on one side and online innovation, free speech, small business, independent media, artists and civil society on the other. It's a handful of big telecom companies against the rest of Canada.

The question is who will control Canada's digital soul? More about this issue at www.saveournet.ca

This is a battle between a handful of big telecom companies on one side and online innovation, free speech, small business, independent media, artists and civil society on the other.

Steve Anderson is the national coordinator for the Campaign for Democratic Media. He contributed to Censored 2008 *and* Battleground: The Media *and has written for* The Tyee, Toronto Star, Epoch Times, Rabble.ca *and* Adbusters. *His syndicated column* Media Links *is supported by* Common Ground, The Tyee, Rabble.ca, The Vancouver Observer *and* VUE Weekly.

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CULTURE

Cinema as therapy

FILMS WORTH WATCHING Robert Alstead

A scene from *Waltz With Bashir.*

Israeli director Ari Folman, a draftee during Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, wanted to tell a story about his wartime experiences, but he realized that "no one would want to watch a middle-aged man telling stories that happened 25 years ago without any archival footage to support them." So he took the unusual step of making an animated documentary.

The four years it took Folman to make the autobiographical *Waltz With Bashir (Vals im Bashir)* was a kind of therapy, as he sought to unlock repressed memories of that episode in his life through interviews with friends and former comrades. Each of the former soldiers coolly and almost matter-of-factly recalls the horrors and stresses of combat, both as it happened and as it affected them in the ensuing years.

The resulting arrangement of original interviews put to comic book style visuals is at once haunting, dreamlike and beautiful in its imagery, through a combination of Flash, classic animation and 3D. "It was shot in a sound studio and cut as a 90-minute length video film. It was made into a story board and then drawn with 2,300 illustrations that were turned into animation," Folman explains. The visual style is simple but effective and while it doesn't use rotoscope animation, where artists illustrate and paint over video images, it does have that naturalistic aspect to it.

Animation allows Folman to decompartmentalize the worlds of dream, memory and reality, showing how each is more closely connected than we normally acknowledge, something that normal video could not accomplish here. Each of the interviewees has powerful images that they carry within them. One has the recurring nightmare of being chased by a pack of snarling dogs. Another remembers the feeling of peace as he floated at sea after swimming away from an ambush that wiped out the rest of his squad. Folman, himself, frequently sees a recurring scene – possibly a memory – where he and two comrades emerge naked from the sea in a war-torn Beirut. They then dress and walk into a street of wailing Palestinian women running toward them.

Folman's search for the blanks in his memory leads him to an understanding of Israel's role in the massacre of an estimated 3,000 refugees in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut. The title of the film, incidentally, is taken from the then president-elect of Lebanon, Bachir Gemayel, whose assassination in 1982 led to Phalangist Christian militias exacting their horrendous revenge. Along the way, the film vividly conveys the tragedy and enduring psychological damage caused by war.

Waltz With Bashir is Israel's foreign language submission for the Oscars and it was nominated for a Golden Globe in the same category in December. There are a number of Globe nominees among this month's new movies.

In *The Reader*, Ralph Fiennes grapples with his conscience when, after the Second World War, he discovers that his first love, a blonde Kate Winslet, was a Nazi concentration camp guard.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, an adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1920s story, retells the adventures of a man (Brad Pitt) who is born old and ages backwards. The film, which also stars Cate Blanchett, has been nominated for five Golden Globes.

Among the flurry of romantic dramas out this month is the pairing of Dustin Hoffman and Emma Thompson in *Last Chance Harvey* (January 23). Hoffman is an over-the-hill jingle-writer, who, while visiting London for his daughter's wedding, strikes up an unexpected relationship with an unhappy, aspiring writer played by Thompson. Both actors were nominated for Globes for their performances. The Globes ceremony takes place January 11.

Robert Alstead blogs at www.2020Vancouver.com

Light for a dark season

THIRTY SOMETHING *Ishi Dinim*

This time last year I was in mourning and now I'm celebrating. I feel so thankful for the life I have and for the people with whom I have been blessed to share it with. Am I naïve to be so positive?

Six months ago, everything was about going green, electing Obama and a bright future. Now I'm told that the next great depression looms on the horizon, our government is in shambles and no one cares about the environment anymore because we've got terrorists again. I try to grasp how all the news will actually affect my life; it seems like a comedy skit that's gone from parody to reality.

I'm no economic sage, but these recent bailout plans seem a little odd under the current system. It is a free-market Darwinist philosophy when times are good for the big boys. But when times get bad, we hand them a socialist taxpayer-paid bandage. Go figure. Well, the fact that there is a president who plays basketball is something to be thankful for. In the New Year, I imagine we'll be reading about people in the White House shooting jumpers in their friends' faces instead of shotguns.

I hope there'll be news that I actually want to hear about: how the concentrated efforts of conscientious, generous humans are widespread and making the world a distinctly better place.

These days, I'm humbled by Mother Nature's abundant delivery of snow and the way its gentle force makes us slow ourselves and ponder the world inside and out. In all the cultural stir at this time of year, remember what we've already got, love the people you're around and be kind and gentle with yourself.

Quote:
I think it's realistic to have hope. One can be a perverse idealist and say the easiest thing: 'I despair. The world's no good.' That's a perverse idealist. It's practical to hope because the hope is for us to survive as a human species. That's very realistic. – Studs Terkel

Film/Series:
The Visitor
The Wire (All five seasons)
Hamlet 2
WALL-E

Web:
www.stv.ca
www.dublab.com

Ishi graduated from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 2001, with a BFA major in photography. He makes films, collects cacti and ponders many things. Currently, he is doing what he can for himself and the planet. contactishi@yahoo.ca. Waiting to hear echoes back…

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Datebook

Endangered Natural Health Products Part II
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$6/children under 12 or $15/$7.50 door
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for the silent auction

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www.victoriateafestival.com

JAN 1

New Years Day at St Paul's Labrynth at 1130 Jervis. Jan 1 from 10am-2pm. Info 604-685-6832 Ext 17. Free/donation.

JAN 10

SHAMANIC DRUMMING & DREAMING CIRCLE: Saturday, 7-10pm. Experience insight/healing from your Nature Spirit Animal Totem guardians. Vancouver Multi-Cultural Society, 1254, W. 7th. Donation. Earthsong Healing Circles. 604.418.9636. www.shamanichealing.info

JAN 10 - 11

Fair Voting BC-STV Conference, Vancouver. Sat, Jan 10th, Wosk Centre for Dialogue: Countering STV Myths. Understanding the Yes Vote in 2005, BC-STV and the Electoral Boundaries. Sun, Jan 11th, SFU Harbour Centre: workshops on communication, organizing and messaging. Register: www.stv.ca/assembly2009 604-484-2979

JAN 11

Meditation for Planetary Peace on the Full Moon, Sunday Jan. 11 at 7:30 PM. 2950 Laurel St, Vancouver. www.pranichealing.ca/vancouver.htm

British author Benjamin Creme speaks of practical solutions to build a new global economy and the emergence of a World Teacher who will give radiance to the dawn of a new era of justice and peace. Video presentation 3 pm, January 11, YWCA Hotel, 733 Beatty, CANFOR Room. free event sponsored by Tara Canada – donations gratefully accepted

Raw Food Chef Certification! Our fundamental course teaches how to go raw and make delicious meals. 6:30-9:30pm $125 778.839.8424 www.rawteacher.com/missjanice

JAN 11, 18 & 25

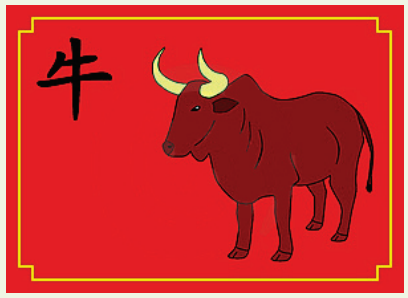
Chinese Zen Meditation Intro Series: 10:30am-12:30pm. Kitsilano area. Contact Lisa of Chan Community Canada 778-881-8680. Certified teacher of Master Sheng Yen of Taiwan.

JANUARY 16

Introduction to Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7.30 pm $10, Course $325. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818 www.pacificreflexology.com

JAN. 17

A Circle Dancing, Mandala Making Day - Hildegard of Bingen and Mactilde of Magdeburg, Victoria @Yurt Facilitators: Louise Taylor BMus, Orff 3, Dalcroze Crt. and Mary Jane Wilson CND MA, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm, $60.00. 250-220-4601 earthliteracies@gmail.com www.livinglanguageinstitutefoundation.org



JAN 26
Year of the Ox begins. The Ox works hard, patiently, and methodically, with intelligence and reflective thought. These people enjoy helping others. Behind this tenacious, laboring, and self-sacrificing exterior lies an active mind.

FEB 5 - 8

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FEB 6 - 8

Awarded as one of Best of L.A. in Yoga Instruction – JULIAN WALKER, www.julianwalkeryoga.com teaches weekend of yoga, ecstatic dance, healing breathwork and sound. 2 to 3-hr classes: $35-$45 or $145/4. Contact Christina: 604-649-8522, shaktipower@shaw.ca

FEB 14

DANCE for the Future of Organic Farming 8th Annual Chicken & Egg Dance Bring Your Valentine! Capri Hall/Subud Centre. 6 - 11pm 3925 Fraser St. @ King Edward Advance tickets $12/adults $6/children under 12 or $15/$7.50 door Call Susan 604-857-1400 or check www.organics.bc.ca for ticket info or to make a donation for the silent auction.

FEB 14 - 15

Annual Two-Day Clinical Hypnosis Training Workshop: 9-5PM, 800 UBC Robson Square, Vancouver. Brochure/registration at www.hypnosis.bc.ca or call 604-688-1714. The Canadian Society of Clinical Hypnosis (BC Div).

FEB 21 - 22

Raw Food Instructor Certification! Extensive gourmet meals, sprouting ,dehydrating, coaching. Opportunity to teach and have own website.11am-7pm $650 Prerequisite: Raw Food Chef Certification (Jan 11th & Feb 8th) www.rawteacher.com/missjanice 778.839.8424

APR 10-13

A Course in Miracles – Easter Workshop in Victoria. Nouk Sanchez & Tomas Vieira, authors: www.TakeMeToTruth.com Undoing the Ego! $399 before Feb 14. Info Jewel www.OnlyLovels.org

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SUNDAYS

Spiritual Centre for Dynamic Living. If you enjoy Oprah's Soul Series with leading spiritual teachers, you'll feel at home in our community. Sundays 11AM - Vancouver Planetarium, 1100 Chestnut St. www.dynamiccentre.com

SOS (Science of Spirituality): See Resource Directory listing in Spiritual Practices for schedule in Richmond, Vancouver & Victoria. 604-277-1247. All Welcome. www.sos.org

Free, anonymous, telephone support line: Guided meditations for people suffering from chronic pain. Non-religious. Counselors have community crisis line training. 7-11PM, 604-936-5683.

MONDAYS

Brian Swimme's, Powers of the Universe, DVD's Victoria 1:00 – 3:00, Jan 12 – Mar 23 $90 or $10 drop in 250-220-4601 earthliteracies@gmail.com www.livinglanguageinstitutefoundation.org

TUESDAYS

Reflexology Student Clinic 6 – 10pm One hour sessions $18. By appointment only. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818 www.pacificreflexology.com

WEDNESDAYS

Hawaiian Medicine Circle 7pm Hawaiian guided meditation, Sharing the Aloha, tea and snacks. $10 donation. At Hale Ola, 1215 Madison Avenue, Burnaby. 604-431-7474 Call Kamu Kaimana

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email: classifieds@commonground.ca

Classifieds

Heal Your Chakras, Heal Your Life Energy Healing Intensive exploring Meditation, Sound, and Movement Wednesdays, 7-8:30 PM Jan.21st-March 04th (604)908-2551 alchemyoflight.com

Brian Swimme's, Earth's Imagination, DVD's Vancouver 7:30 – 9:00, Jan 28 – Mar 18 $60 or $10 drop in 604-272-4779 earthliteracies@gmail.com www.livinglanguageinstitutefoundation.org

Dru Yoga classes with Darquise: East Side Yoga – 1707 Grant St at Commercial, 7:15-8:45pm. Series 5 classes $64 Drop-in $15. Contact anahatabreath@shaw.ca 604-936-3255.

Voice Dialogue (7-9 pm) Cultivating awareness of the intelligence within; explore how to enhance relationship intimacy and grow more fully into who you are meant to be. Call Dave @ 604-985-5771 or 604-488-9203 www.davewaugh.net

FRIDAYS

Just Dance! Three Fridays a month. Alcohol & smoke-free. 9pm, 2114 W. 4th Ave. @ Arbutus. $10/5. www.justdance.ca.

"Destiny Dialogues" Free Talks First Friday of each month, experiential evening that explores the inter-connections between destiny and suffering, relationships, vocations, joy, teachers, character, nature, family, dreams. 7-9pm. 604-317-1613.

GIVE PEACE A CHANT! Energize yourself with the yoga of KIRTAN,Sanskrit call and response yoga chanting, healing mantras and sound vibrations in a friendly community setting. No experience necessary. New schedule: 1st, 3rd, and 5th Friday nights only, 7:30 pm, $10-20 by donation, 2111 W. 16th Ave @ Arbutus, www.givepeaceachant.org

DRU Yoga in Kits: Gentle, Flowing, Heart-based, Energeic. Beginners welcome. Friday night classes, 7pm-8:30pm, resume Jan 9th, St. James Community Square, 3214 W. 10th at Trutch, 604-876-5153, soulforce@telus.net www.sjcommunitysquare.org

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Free Meditation Workshop: Experience Kundalini awakening through Sahaja Yoga, as taught by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi & enjoy your Powers at our Weekly classes, always free and open to all. 604-597-8440, www.sahajayoga.org.

Unitarian kids believe in their ability and responsibility to make a difference in the world. Programs for kids 3 years and up, 370 Mathers St., West Vancouver, 604-926-1621, www.nsuc.ca.

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Spiritual Emergence Service provides free support, information and referrals for people experiencing psycho-spiritual challenges, spiritual awakening and transformative states. www.spiritualemergence.net, 604-533-3545

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SECOND WIND STORIES is inviting submissions for a proposed anthology about true-life love & success stories by 40-somethings. Visit www.secondwindstories.com

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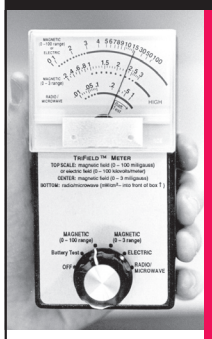

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Environmentalist Thelma MacAdam passes peacefully

by Lorna Hancock

Thelma MacAdam, a well-loved and respected environmentalist, passed away in her sleep on December 19. She was bright and active right up until her last day. I am one of thousands who are honoured to have known her, and will miss her greatly.

As Chair of the Environmental Committee for Burnaby-based Health Action Network Society for 25 years, Thelma provided good, solid, scientific arguments against chloramines, chlorine, fluoride, incineration, food irradiation, pesticides, herbicides, mercury amalgam and many other topics. This modest, but determined, Port Coquitlam grandmother and environmental activist won recognition across Canada. Her name Thelma means will and volition in Greek, qualities she certainly embodied.

The following is a partial list of her achievements:

1989 – *Homemakers Magazine's* top 10 women *Making a Difference*.

1999 – BC Environmental Network honour for outstanding community service on behalf of the environment.

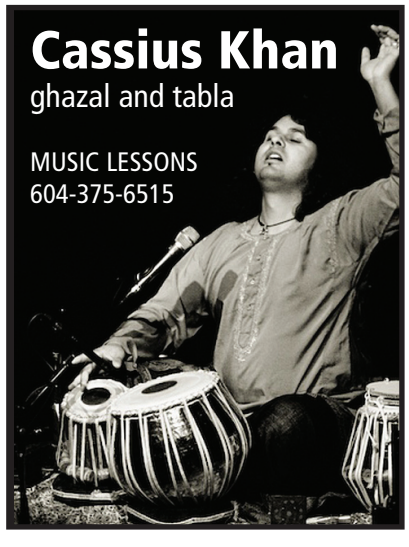
1999 – Featured internationally in the book *Sweeping the Earth, Women Taking Action for a Healthy Planet*.

2000 – Environmental Awareness Award at the Spirit of Community Awards, Tri-Cities Society for Community Development.

2002 – City of Burnaby Environment Award in Communications

Thelma was quoted in major Canadian media and she was a frequent talk show guest. Rafe Mair said, "I admired Thelma enormously. The community was a much better place for her fighting the fight for our atmosphere long before it was fashionable to do so. She did indeed make a difference."

Lorna Hancock is executive director of HANS Health Action Network Society www.hans.org



...continued from p. 17

ment where my parents sat underneath the pale yellow light of a kitchen wall lamp, counting their pennies on an old porcelain-topped table. The pennies dropped, click, click, click. Pennies to pay the utility bills.

It matters how much people pay for electricity. It matters if the public owns its own system and has political and financial control over rates. I could hear the pennies dropping, click, click, click, as Mr. Weir insisted on the sale of Muny Light. I remembered my family and the struggles of people like them. I couldn't do it. I couldn't sell. Not for $50 million, not for anything.

"I'm not going to sell, even if it means my career," I said, as council president Forbes looked on in surprise.

"Why do you want to end your career? Sell the system. Get rid of it!" he said.

"Is there some other way we can work this out?" I asked Brock Weir.

He shook his head "No."

Throughout that day, every media outlet in Cleveland echoed the sentiment of Cleveland Trust's chairman, including the morning newspaper headline, with such depth of coverage and intensity that it seemed the city itself would crumble unless I agreed to the sale, which also included a provision dropping the $330 million antitrust damage suit.

The objective condition of the city's finances received no honest review. The sale of Muny Light was depicted as the only way the city could avoid fiscal disaster. The majority leader of the City Council held a news conference live on the six o'clock news. He declared that if I sold Muny Light, "the chairman of the Cleveland Trust bank has informed the council that his bank will purchase $50 million worth of city bonds. So, in effect, we have a plan sitting on the mayor's desk that will absolutely end the city's financial problems, if he will put his signature on it."

The $50 million bribe had been brought out into the open in a manner that now suggested it was a legitimate offer, a fake solution to a fake crisis. I refused to sell.

As Cleveland television stations covered the event live, with a countdown clock that looked like a twisted version of New Year's Eve, midnight struck. Television networks of several countries recorded the grim event: the city of Cleveland became the first American city to go into default since the Great Depression. The default was over just $14.5 million dollars in credit.

When I called for a congressional investigation a few days later, Cleveland Trust denied it wanted Muny Light, CEI denied it wanted Muny Light, the council president denied the chairman of Cleveland Trust wanted Muny Light, and the majority leader said he was mistaken when he said live on the six o'clock news that the bank chairman offered $50 million in credit for Muny Light. Muny Light was no longer the issue. It was the mayor and his obstinacy that caused the crisis. So went the waltz into a netherworld devoid of truth, justice, reality or morality.

Though the people of Cleveland supported keeping Muny Light by a margin of two to one in a referendum a few months later, and passed an income tax increase by the same margin in order for the city to pay off the defaulted bond anticipation notes, the state of Ohio intervened and put the city into fiscal receivership. I lost the mayor's race in 1979. The banks renegotiated the defaulted notes, at a profit. The city lost its antitrust suit against CEI in 1981, in a hung jury. An appeal failed.

I was out of major public office for almost 15 years until, in 1993, Cleveland announced an expansion of Muny Light (now called Cleveland Public Power). At that time, the City Council and others decided that I had made the right decision in refusing to sell Muny Light. The city and its residents had saved hundreds of millions of dollars through Muny Light's reduced electric rates and the savings the taxpayers enjoyed from Muny's lower-cost power for street lighting and city buildings.

I attempted another political comeback and this time succeeded, getting elected to the state Senate with the motto: "Because he was right." My campaign literature showed a radiant light bulb behind my name. Two years later, I was elected to Congress, with the slogan "Light up Congress." Today I am the chairman of the House Government Oversight Domestic Policy Subcommittee, which has broad jurisdiction over most government departments and agencies, including the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and electric utility matters generally.

The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. is now a subsidiary of First Energy Co., which was fined by the NRC for various safety violations and, a few years ago, was found to have primary responsibility for the 2003 blackout that left 50 million people throughout the northeastern United States without electricity.

Cleveland Trust no longer exists. No other bank involved in the default survives, except for National City, which faces extinction through shareholder approval of a takeover by PNC bank. I have spent much time trying to save National City.

One newspaper, the *Cleveland Press*, which advocated that CEI be Cleveland's sole electricity provider, ceased publication. The other strong proponent of the sale of Muny Light, the Plain Dealer, struggles to survive.

The city's electric system endures and this past year celebrated its 100th anniversary.

On Track Zodiac

JANUARY 2009 Adrien Dilon

ARIES (Mar 21 – Apr 19)
Within the theory of Buddhist home décor, blank walls (walls without art) may, in geomancy terms, suggest limited opportunities. However, you might choose to have less clutter in your life with a home that is more like a pure canvas, with serenity flowing through. You desire to settle into private luxury.

TAURUS (Apr 20 – May 21)
Patience is said to be an antidote for how we are affected by our earthly struggles. Perhaps our thoughts are the cause of the active forces that take us further away from our truest natures. Taureans are noted for their natural ways and means. Remain calm and steadfast.

GEMINI (May 22 – Jun 20)
You are up to your unique brand of hijinks. Even after everyone else has partied-out, you continue on being merry and playful. There may be opportunities for you to find new playmates. Your wish to find others who can keep up with you could come true.

CANCER (Jun 21 – Jul 22)
Although the past informs you, it may also seem to haunt you. Even when you're on a carefree holiday, it could appear like a ghost on the water. Central characters will arrive in your life to lend you understanding and help you lead a more extraordinary life.

LEO (Jul 23 – Aug 22)
The heart, the centre of emotion and seat of the soul, is known for its many virtues. This life-giving pump is under the domain of Leo rulership. This is a time of expansion for you, breathing new life into all matters of the heart. Seek out those who need acknowledgement of their significance.

VIRGO (Aug 23 – Sep 22)
There is a friction in your relationships now that could spark and ignite your inner fire or bring your amorous nature to the fore. Your platonic relationships will thrive while the lure of cupid's glance may lead you to new territory.

LIBRA (Sep 23 – Oct 22)
The perfection of your timing – the way you feel that everything you touch turns to gold – is becoming abundantly clear. Perhaps you wish to revel in the divine orchestration of being in the right place at the right time. Your mind hasn't wandered off track lately and you enjoy the ride wherever it takes you.

SCORPIO (Oct 23 – Nov 21)
Learning to not take things personally will surely feel like a task. You need to remain neutral about the things you hear and perceive that have nothing to do with you. It might be time for you to make your mark and strike out into completely new relationships, perhaps without fear.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
Mercury goes counter to its usual direction mid-month and could provoke close encounters of an emotional kind. It is, however, travelling in harmonic degrees of elements that are working together for the best outcome. Stay in the moment as Mercury too will move into the here and now..

CAPRICORN (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
Happy Birthday you pyramid climber, you mason of tall and mighty monuments. As you forge ahead with your quest to climb even more mountains – both symbolic and literal – you bring your great wisdom to each new idea, making things stronger and more stable..

AQUARIUS (Jan 20 – Feb 19)
We delight now in Jupiter's arrival in Aquarius, which creates unity and harmony through expansion and awareness. As relations in business and friendships play out, we see a breaking down of boundaries. You are being signalled to finish off some old and worn-out policies.

PISCES (Feb 20 – Mar 20)
The unrequited love that usually dances through your life may show up to usher in the New Year with a garland of flowers. However poetic it may seem, reality is closer than ever. With Venus now in Pisces, the very least that happens is desire is met with more than a touch of your hand..

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